Back to the manuscript

Andrew J. Brown

HENRI GIBAUD
Un Inédit d'Érasme: La première version du Nouveau Testament copiée par Pierre Meghen 1506–1509
585pp. Moreana, BP 808, 49005 Angers. 765fr.

The Bible of the medieval Church, the Latin Vulgate translation, had become a symbol of the corruptness of ecclesiastical tradition. The importance of the New Testament which Erasmus published in 1516 was that it offered a revised Latin translation, together with the first ever publication of the Greek text, as well as a volume of notes in which the errors of the Latin Vulgate were freely discussed. University scholars and educated laymen all over Europe greeted the new edition with excitement and delight, for it seemed to them that now at last they drank from the pure waters of the fountain-head.

Erasmus published a series of such editions, which were used by the Reformers as the basis of their translations into the vernacular languages, chief among them being the English New Testament of William Tyndale and the German Bible of Martin Luther. In this way the Scriptures became the possession of ordinary people, and a great rebirth of Christianity was made possible.

For these reasons any study of Erasmus's New Testament is of particular interest. Henri Gibaud's book does not in fact set out to be a contribution to Reformation history (as a Catholic, he prefers to confine Erasmus to the safer category of "Christian humanism"), nor is it primarily an analysis of the characteristics of Erasmus's translation. Essentially it is a transcription of four Latin manuscripts which between them contain a complete copy of that translation. Accompanying this transcription are detailed notes, showing the differences from the Latin Vulgate and also the differences from Erasmus's printed edition of 1516.

These large, sumptuously produced manuscript volumes, dating from the early sixteenth century, have an aesthetic attraction of their own quite apart from their connection with Erasmus. The most lavishly decorated of the four is among the treasures of Hatfield House; the other volumes are kept at the British Library and the University Library of Cambridge.

Dr Gibaud's introduction (in 132 preliminary pages) offers a detailed physical description of the manuscripts. Special attention is paid to the portrait miniatures, which are attributed (somewhat unconvincingly) to Simon Bening of Bruges. While the reproductions of these portraits are disappointingly poor, considering the cost of this volume, the illuminated page from the beginning of the Pauline Epistles is splendidly reproduced as a colour frontispiece.

The title and introduction, and indeed the motivation of the whole book, rest on the assumption that the manuscripts under consideration constitute an unpublished "earlier version" of Erasmus's Latin New Testament. Three of the manuscripts contain detailed colophons mentioning that they were written in 1506 and 1509 for John Colet, the Dean of St Paul's. Because of these dates, the manuscripts are usually thought to represent an early stage in Erasmus's translation work, some ten years before publication, hence appearing to throw light on the origins of his first printed edition of 1516. This view has been adopted by practically all Erasmian scholars in the present century.

There are compelling reasons, however, for thinking that this consensus of opinion is fundamentally mistaken. The lack of any comparative study of the scribe's style of writing, ignorance as to Erasmus's Greek sources and a mistrust of Erasmus's explicit statements about his work have all combined to make this mistake possible. (A fuller treatment of this subject will be found in the forthcoming issue of the *Cambridge Bibliographical Society Transactions*.)

The Latin manuscripts contain two translations, the Latin of Erasmus and the Vulgate side by side in parallel columns. In the three volumes which have dated colophons, the two translations are written in similar but not identical styles of script. The existence of stylistic differences is not always of particular significance, as a versatile scribe was quite capable of varying his style of script according to the subject-matter. Here, however, the differences of style are important, as the dated colophons are written in the style used for the Vulgate column rather than the Erasmus column. This suggests the possibility that the Vulgate portion of these manuscripts was completed in 1506–09, in accordance with the dates in the colophons, but that the Erasmus portion was added some time later, reflecting a period of development in the scribe's style of writing.

The scribe's name was Peter Meghen, whose distinctive script has been identified in a number of other Latin manuscripts. When these other productions are compared, it becomes evident that Meghen's copy of Erasmus is more in keeping with the script he used in the late 1520s, while his copy of the Vulgate is written in the style of the early 1500s.

Erasmus's Latin translation was based directly upon Greek manuscripts. In some passages he reproduced unusual textual features which he found in his Greek originals, and many of these features can be traced to a group of manuscripts he used at Basel, which are now preserved in the Basel University Library. He did not have access to these manuscripts until 1514, between five and eight years later than the date when the copies of his translation purport to have been written.

Erasmus himself always claimed that his translation was hastily prepared shortly before publication, and that his original intention had been to print the traditional Vulgate text. From the palaeographic and Greek evidence there is good reason to believe that Erasmus did not prepare his translation until 1514–16. After it was published in 1516, he at once set about an extensive revision of the work, leading to a second edition in 1519.

Gibaud's title, *La première version ... 1506–1509*, is entirely a misnomer. Far from representing an "unpublished" original, the manuscripts here edited contain substantially the text of Erasmus's second revised version, and are hardly more than copies from a printed edition (probably from one of the many reprints published from 1522 onwards). Although one naturally expects a printed book to be based on a manuscript rather than vice versa, it is known that rich patrons liked to have printed books copied out by hand, and Peter Meghen in fact copied other printed books apart from Erasmus's New Testament.

Ultimately what is required is a critical edition of Erasmus's five printed folio editions dating from 1516 to 1535. The texts which Dr Gibaud has edited tell us a great deal about the scribe who produced them, but very little about Erasmus's own creative development. Nevertheless, as a rough tool of comparison between Erasmus and the Vulgate, the book may yet serve a useful purpose.

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Published by Times Newspapers Limited, P.O. Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, England, and printed by Northampton Mercury Co. Ltd, Upper Mounts, Northampton NN1 3HR. Friday, July 5, 1985. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. ISSN

TLS
The Times Literary Supplement

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Cover picture: A detail from Alessandro Algardi's statue of St John the Evangelist in San Silvestro al Quirinale, reproduced from the book reviewed on page 763.

Lyrical refinements

Francis Haskell

JENNIFER MONTAGU
Alessandro Algardi
Volume I, 304pp.
Volume II, pp305–487, plus black-and-white plates. Yale University Press. £65 the set.
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The name of Algardi first attracted widespread attention in England a few years ago when an export licence was refused for a marble bust by him which had surfaced in a country-house sale. For a number of reasons the fate of the bust became something of a *cause célèbre* before it found a permanent home in Manchester rather than in New York; looking through Jennifer Montagu's superb book on the sculptor we can now see that it is one of only two or three works in marble by him to have left Italy and that it is most unlikely that any more will ever do so. The bust portrays an ageing man of great elegance and dignity; the trim moustache turned up at the edges and the neatly groomed beard convey an impression of aristocratic refinement, as do the beautifully modelled skin drawn tightly over the cheek bones and even the studied note of casualness to be detected in the folds of his cape (*mozzetta*). But, partly because the eyes are only lightly indicated, the expression is withdrawn, indeed remote, rather than aloof. We are not encouraged to listen to or to address, to obey or to venerate this grave personage. He is, in fact, Monsignor Cerri, a papal lawyer, who was intimately attached to the service of the Barberini, the family of Pope Urban VIII. For at least a generation the Barberini dominated art patronage in Rome, but they never showed the slightest interest in Algardi. It is probable – but it must be admitted that there is no evidence to back up the supposition – that Monsignor Cerri (or his heirs, because the bust may be posthumous) would have preferred to have had his portrait made by Bernini, who was not only the special protégé of the Barberini (and hence responsible for their neglect of Algardi), but by far the more celebrated sculptor – but no doubt Bernini was much too busy with more important commissions.

The question must surely have arisen for, as the blurb points out with a degree of modesty unusual in this type of literature, Algardi was only "the second greatest sculptor of baroque Italy". Such a grading does not carry with it any of the implications that would attach to, let us say, the "second greatest composer of mid-Victorian England", for seventeenth-century Italy was very rich in sculptural talent; and indeed some – but very few – contemporaries of the two men (who were born in the same year, 1598) even seem to have thought of Algardi as the greater artist. But one of the most interesting and curious points to emerge from Dr Montagu's book is that none of these contemporaries is on record as having suggested (as all later historians and critics were to do) that Bernini and Algardi were working in fundamentally different, antagonistic styles – the first of which would eventually be characterized as "baroque" and the second as "classical" – or, at least, "classicizing".

There is, however, evidence that, in general, connoisseurs and artists did sometimes make distinctions which we could interpret in these terms. Thus Cassiano dal Pozzo, another intimate of the Barberini household and the most distinguished patron of his day, complained bitterly about the times in which he lived, for "they allow the whim of a few artists who wish to break away from the antique to bring architecture back to barbarism", and he gave pride of place in his collection to Poussin, whose views on the matter were certainly not in doubt. And an (admittedly inadequate) account survives of a dispute in the 1630s between Pietro da Cortona and Andrea Sacchi concerning the number of figures which it was desirable to introduce into a composition: the "baroque" Cortona supported the concept of richness and variety, while Sacchi argued in favour of a few figures on the grounds that "a picture should be compared to a tragedy, which is the more worthy of praise the greater the effect obtained by the fewest actors".

When we try to infer, from the scanty evidence available, Algardi's contemporary reputation and standpoint within this spectrum of opinion the results are surprising. Cassiano dal Pozzo, for instance, owned (and possibly commissioned) a vivacious, though posthumous, bust by Bernini of his deeply admired uncle – this is now at Castle Howard and as it is reported to have been offered to a grudging Chancellor in lieu of tax one anticipates with dread the moment when it too becomes a *cause célèbre* – and on at least one occasion he expressed enthusiasm for Bernini's genius; whereas his only contact with Algardi seems to have been as a messenger acting on behalf of other patrons. And Dr Montagu has now established beyond doubt a fact that was omitted (suppressed?) by Algardi's first important biographer: he and Pietro da Cortona were intimate friends. Personal friendships among artists – even among art historians – can, of course, transcend "ideological" disagreements, but Dr Montagu argues very tellingly that the artistic aims of both men were often surprisingly similar and that it was in fact only after Algardi's death that he was retrospectively given the honours due to a classicizing, "anti-baroque" artist. Subsequent generations have, therefore, been misled by a system of pigeonholing which was not based on a close scrutiny of the art itself.

One of the great achievements of this book is the perspicacity of just such a scrutiny. With doctrinaire labels out of the way, it becomes possible to look at Algardi – that famous but unknown master – with fresh eyes, and I cannot think of any other seventeenth-century Italian artist whose achievement has been examined to such good purpose. For many of the compositions quite a number of preliminary drawings, *modelli* and variants survive and as these are all reproduced in the outstandingly good plates, we are brought very close indeed to the artist and can, with the expert guidance provided, watch him experimenting, correcting himself, sometimes fumbling, more usually solving the problems facing him – for Dr Montagu's understanding (and explanation) of the technical processes involved is unparalleled.

Algardi responds particularly well to this sort of detailed examination, because (as presented here) he was, in essentials, a straightforward enough artist, not much concerned with out-of-the-way imagery or the conveying of out-of-the-way experiences. His sources are on the whole fairly obvious (although most of them had not been detected before) and only in the field of relief sculpture was he an outstanding innovator: some of the most enthralling pages in the book discuss the difficulties involved in producing such reliefs and how Algardi coped with them. By instinct and training he was a modeller rather than a carver, and Dr Montagu shows repeatedly how much more at ease he always felt with small-scale works "which are the most entirely personal, the most inventive, and the most expressive of Algardi's true vision".

What was that vision? It was, we are told in a generalizing passage which aims to explore the nature of his achievement, essentially one of refined and lyrical beauty. Like Guido Reni, who also came from Bologna but who was some twenty years older, Algardi put beauty of form, "grace of pose and ease of gesture, which are usually recognized and appreciated only by the trained connoisseur", far above the depiction of drama and passion, or even – so it is implied – the expression of emotion. This seems to me to explain well enough many of his strengths and some of his weaknesses, but I am not sure that Dr Montagu consistently appreciates the full implications of what is involved. She rightly points to the absence of drama in the almost balletic "Beheading of St Paul" in Bologna and she convincingly (or fairly convincingly) gives a moral justification for the elegant restraint of such an interpretation on the grounds that "the saint draws our compassion by his calm acceptance of death, not by any tortured appeal to our innate loathing of pain and mutilation"; but I find it very difficult to accept her view that Algardi has been successful in conveying the spiritual ecstasy of "St Philip Neri" in the Chiesa Nuova in Rome. In this superb group it is the "unworldly purity and beauty" of the attendant angel which gives the truer indication of Algardi's gifts and achievements: the angel's head, and (to judge from the photograph) the terracotta model for it in Hamburg, can surely communicate to us an impression analogous to that once conveyed to connoisseurs by the head of the "Apollo Belvedere". Similarly, I cannot often see in Algardi's admirable portraits the characterization discerned by Montagu: although so very different in every other way, they strike me as being almost as idealized as those of Bernini. Algardi is, above all, a portraitist of old men (many of his busts were presumably made for commemorative purposes) and his old men all share an expression of dignified, world-weary wisdom.

Algardi's sense of rhythmical and lyrical beauty is seen at its most exquisite in the stucco reliefs in the Villa Doria Pamphili, which rank among the most appealing of all evocations of antiquity, and in some of his smaller bronzes. On a grander level it is to be found in the Tomb of Pope Leo XI in St Peter's, in which a Berninesque prototype is stripped of colour, drama, movement (and vulgarity?) to be given instead a quiet purity not to reappear in monumental sculpture until Canova, whose most ambitious works, however, lack Algardi's feeling for melodious flow.

But, in the end, we are all – author, reviewer, visitor to Rome – driven to make that specific comparison with Bernini which their contemporaries so tiresomely refused to consider significant. Dr Montagu's judgments can be very severe: when Bernini indulges in some

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The grindstone of the senses

Rudolf Arnheim

KRISZTINA PASSUTH
Moholy-Nagy
446pp, with 252 illustrations, 44 in colour.
Thames and Hudson. £20.
0 500 54096 9

László Moholy-Nagy was born ninety years ago, in the Hungarian village of Mohol. When, fifty-one years later, he died of leukaemia in Chicago, he had absorbed and greatly enriched significant aesthetic and ideological manifestations of Western art during the period that included the two world wars. In Krisztina Passuth's weighty monograph, over 250 well-printed illustrations testify to the sensitivity of Moholy's compositions and the wealth of his inventions; but this complete and reliable survey also makes it clear that his work amounted to hundreds of happy impulses in a startling variety of media and styles rather than the kind of monolithic structure that constitutes the life-work of the truly great: Moholy was the kaleidoscopic reflection of a chequered period of modern art, as indispensable to it, one is tempted to say, as the few illustrious achievers. Comparable perhaps to Camille Pissarro's way of uniting and nourishing the Impressionist movement without attaining the power of a Monet or Seurat, Moholy's mission was that of responding to the innovations of the Russians, the Germans and the French, refining, combining and interpreting them, and gathering the harvest of the pioneers in the most influential art teaching job of the century. Neither the German Bauhaus, which he joined in 1923 as its youngest teacher, nor its successor, the Institute of Design in Chicago, is conceivable without Moholy.

Throughout the forever fragmentary exploits of his nomadic life he remained the confident rebel whose attitude had been shaped in his youth by the Activist movement and the Hungarian Revolution. But while in his contact with the comrades in the homeland he was willing to speak the language of Communist politics, he later came to formulate his ideals more humanistically:

> The revolutionist should always remain conscious that the class struggle is, in the last analysis, not about capital nor the means of production, but actually about the right of the individual to have a satisfying occupation, a life-work that meets inner needs, a balanced way of life, and a real release of human energies.

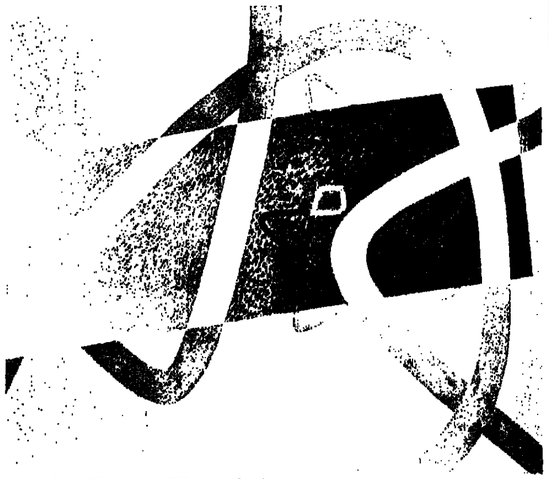
In fact, Passuth points out that what Moholy took from his contemporaries were neither the cosmological visions of a Malevich or Mondrian nor the Soviet ideologies of the Constructivists, neither the social realism of the documentary photographers nor the whimsical satire of the Dadaists or Surrealists, but rather their new languages, which stimulated his visual explorations. "The true artist", he said, "is the grindstone of the senses; he sharpens eyes, mind, and feeling; he interprets ideas and concepts through his own media."

The translation of Dr Passuth's book, done in English by three Hungarians Eva Grusz, Judy Szöllösy and László Baránszky, and revised by Kenneth McRobbie and Ilona Jánosi, is hardly a literary treat. (We are told, for example, that Moholy adopted from the Dadaists "the idea of freedom: that everything was possible as well as its opposite", and that the tension of his lines "suggests some inner flame".) But the book certainly deserves to be made available outside its country of origin. The author is quite successful in tracing, in her introductory essay, the development of Moholy's work by connecting it with theoretical statements in letters, memos, programmes and testimonials; the text of these documents constitutes the particularly valuable third part of the book.

Among the many issues that occupied the minds of Moholy-Nagy and his contemporaries in theory and practice, two may be singled out here. One of them concerns the visual phenomenon of transparency, which led Moholy eventually to move from painting to constructions of glass and plastics. We can trace the origin of this development in the history of modern sculpture and architecture to the gradual replacement of solid material objects with mere vehicles or foci of energy, the spatial interrelations of visual forces emanating from almost disembodied carriers. The fantastic imagery of a "glass architecture", conceived by the poet Paul Scheerbart and the architect Bruno Taut, found its two-dimensional counterpart in the translucent walls of the painter Feininger's cityscapes and the geometrical abstractions of Moholy-Nagy. The ghostliness of these apparitions – I remember the film-director Fritz Lang depicting the insanity of his villainous Dr Mabuse by a set of furniture made entirely of glass – was matched with a new spirituality that put the pure dynamics of light in the place of the tangible world of matter. Issuing from nowhere and traversing all partitions with frictionless ease, the medium of light raised the world of geometrical shapes to an even more rarefied level of abstraction. Moholy pursued this *ignis fatuus* on his canvases, in his sculptures and films, and on the theatre stage. His Light-Space Modulator, a construction of metals, plastic, wood and an electric motor, on which he worked for eight years, was designed to project moving flashes of light and shadow on the walls of a room. Deprived of its motion and light source, the device now languishes in a remote corner of Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum.

More lastingly persuasive than this ambiguous combination of mobile sculpture and projection machine is the beauty of Moholy's many photograms, which surely represent his finest work; and it is the relation to photography that deserves to be cited as a second significant concern of his generation. The new medium had been received by the artists with ambivalent feelings. But whereas the Russian abstractionist Malevich protested that he had "never supported and approved the detail mechanical glazed photographic objective", Moholy had no trouble combining documentary film experiments with the controlled geometry of his paintings. In fact, he welcomed the photographic medium's quality of accident and irrationality, which he needed to rescue himself from the formalism of his painted abstractions. In the witty photomontages of his Bauhaus years he had combined snapshots with diagrammatic lines and circles; but a true synthesis of the two media was attained only when he abandoned the camera lens and had the physical objects themselves project their shadows directly upon the photosensitive surface. "The mysteriousness of his photograms", writes Passuth, "is one of the sources of their beauty: even the most commonplace elements are transformed to the point of becoming unidentifiable, and their transparent shapes seem to refer to another, hardly perceptible reality." The photogram was a new and eminently original pact between abstract shape and physical reality.

Passuth's book is not a biography. While such a limitation to the work and ideas of an artist can be entirely feasible, it leaves us characteristically with an incomplete presentation in the case of Moholy-Nagy. His activity was inseparable from his personal dreams and projects, his friends and enemies, patrons, disciples and collaborators. He could never work alone, and his last book, *Vision in Motion*, illustrates his will and testament with a rich panorama of what the students and faculty of the Institute of Design created through the inspiration of the great teacher. Passuth's useful book comes to life when the reader turns back to the biography published in 1950 by Moholy's talented second wife, Sibyl. Aptly subtitled "Experiment in Totality", it reveals the disarmingly charming, undiscourageable visionary, who, forever disappointed and forever optimistic, consumed himself in the service of his intense humanity.



Moholy-Nagy's "Space CH3" (1938) is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Foreign exchange

Robert Snell

MARCIA POINTON
The Bonington Circle: English watercolour and Anglo-French landscape 1790–1855
164pp. The Hendon Press, 36 Hendon Street, Brighton, BN2 2EG. £8.50.
0951025503

The Bonington Circle is deceptively modest in its aims (an impression not discouraged by its format and layout: it looks like a university prospectus). The book consists of a number of short, concisely written chapters, which yield a detailed account of the development and richness of contacts during this period between English (or Anglo-French) watercolourists, and France; received ideas are quietly and efficiently overturned on the way.

We are reminded, for example, of the extent to which cultural and economic exchange persisted throughout the Napoleonic wars; while artistic communication may indeed have been hindered on one level – that of the Grand Tourists – the wars "may actually have stimulated patronage and dealing through commercial and diplomatic interests". Certainly the relatively easy access to a market which English watercolourists found in France after 1815 would suggest a degree of such pre-established and uninterrupted artistic contact. For the *dramatis personae* of this study are not the Royal Academy's Haydons, Wests, Opies or Turners, but "artisans, craftsmen and artists of humbler pretensions"; from their shared skills and the organization of their working lives emerged the phenomenon known to us, misleadingly, as "Boningtonisme", and to early nineteenth-century French critics as "l'école Anglo-Vénétienne".

If Richard Parkes Bonington himself is necessarily a key figure in this study, it is as its starting point rather than as its central actor. We are led to consider the "economic pattern from which the aesthetic product emerges", through the lives of Louis Francia (long recognized as a major influence on Bonington, but now conclusively shown to have played an even more important role in stimulating cross-Channel contacts), of Thomas Shotter Boys, of the Fieldings (the bewildering complexity of this family is here unravelled once and for all), and of William Wyld. Pointon achieves a fine integration of social history and critical judgment: we are reminded that watercolour, while increasingly acceptable for exhibition, both could transcend academic categories and did in fact bridge a "gigantic social and economic gulf", employed as it was by artist and patron, artisan, craftsman and aristocratic amateur. Against this background, we might gain a more rounded understanding of, for example, Delacroix's friendship with Bonington and the Fieldings; we see how artistic "influence" is, necessarily, both circumscribed and stimulated by economic and social possibilities for travel and exchange.

The book's point of departure is a salutary concern to challenge art history's over-reliance upon the concept of authorship and upon the mere identification of artists within schools, to challenge myths about the individual artist. The Bonington legend (the sickly young life, candid Keatsian soul; presience of mortality, etc) provides the myth, and the Anglo-French circle, to whose corporate achievements Bonington's were inextricably linked, offers the model subject through which Marcia Pointon evolves her own exemplary and painstaking approach. Her aim: to establish the bi-national group not as a new class of "School" or a sub-category of Romanticism, but simply as a historical entity in its own right, is amply vindicated. This richly documented (if under-illustrated) study is an important and original contribution to the social and cultural history of its period.

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A place in the country

John Ziman

LAWRENCE BADASH
Kapitza, Rutherford, and the Kremlin
129pp. Yale University Press. £20.
0 300 01465 1

In October 1934, Professor Peter Leonidovich Kapitza, FRS, was prevented from leaving the Soviet Union to return to his post as Director of the Royal Society Mond Laboratory of the University of Cambridge. This fact was kept quiet until April 1935, whilst the head of the Cavendish Laboratory, Lord Rutherford, and various other eminent British and European scientists made hesitant and unsuccessful representations to the Soviet authorities on Kapitza's behalf. When the news finally came out, it hit the headlines for a few weeks, but with no better result. Eventually the Russians agreed to pay a reasonable sum for the key items of Kapitza's experimental apparatus, which were shipped to Moscow, and installed in a new "Institute for Physical Problems" established there for him. These are the bare bones of an episode that is still widely remembered in the world of physics.

Almost every day, throughout those months of fading hope, Kapitza wrote fully and frankly to his wife Anna, who passed on excerpts of his letters (translated – presumably by Anna herself – into vigorous broken English) to Rutherford, his revered father-in-science. Kapitza died last year, at the age of eighty-nine: now, at last, we are given his own reactions to the event that changed the whole direction of his life.

Kapitza was a maverick. He describes himself in his letters, absolutely accurately, as a man who "never lies, never talks idly", and who "never listens to anyone but himself". But he was not disaffected from Soviet Russia or its government. He had simply come to Cambridge twelve years before, to take part in the making of the new physics, and cheekily charmed his way into the Cavendish. He had soon established himself as one of the most energetic and effective members of that brilliant school, specializing in the experimental study of matter at very low temperatures and in very high magnetic fields. He was as much an engineer as a physicist, with a taste for unusually large and expensive pieces of apparatus, and the Mond Laboratory had just been built and equipped to satisfy that taste. If he was something of a square peg, then he certainly fitted perfectly into the square hole he had made for himself in England.

Imagine, then, his anger and distress when he was told that he would henceforth have to do his research in Russia. Almost every year he had gone back home, and returned without any difficulty. It was true that another very able Russian physicist, George Gamow, had recently had difficulties in going abroad, but Kapitza dismissed the risk of being detained himself. Yes, he was still a Soviet citizen, and as a Corresponding Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences he had a duty to serve his country. But he was doing that already, indirectly. Pure science was, after all, completely international. What would be the point, argued this eminently practical man to himself, of trying to make a scientist do research against his will, under adverse conditions, in Moscow or Leningrad rather than Cambridge, when the fruits would be available freely to all mankind? As he said, it was "as if Beethoven was called and told to write the 4th Symphony, by order".

Apart from being away from his wife and family, the conditions under which he lived were not bad. He was a simple-living man, who cared nothing for luxury, although he was justifiably enraged at having to pay the enormous sum of more than 1,000 roubles as import duty on the parcel of his own clothes that his wife sent to him when it was clear that he would not be back soon. He moved about freely, talked openly about his plight to friends, scientific colleagues and political authorities, often went to the theatre, and was permitted, as we have seen, to write about it all to his wife (and through her, to Rutherford) without any hint of interference. Stalin's great purge was actually well under way, but the natural scientists were still being treated with some respect, and Kapitza suffered none of the indignities that the Soviet Government now customarily inflicts on those of its citizens whom it wishes to bend to its ends.

The "Kapitza case" is often quoted as a first shot in the Soviet attack on the freedom of scientists to take part in the international scientific enterprise on their own terms. That was how Rutherford himself saw it, although he agreed that "the Soviet authorities have a legal claim on Professor Kapitza's services". Cruellier cases have since taught us that this was an infringement of Kapitza's right, under the international code of human rights, to "leave any country, including his own".

To my mind, Kapitza's letters are more relevant to another present-day issue. The heart of his despair is his judgment that (*sic*) "a real place science has not got in the country". The Academy is led by doddering nonentities. Technical inadequacies and bureaucratic obfuscation make good research impossible. The local scientists distrust and shun him – whether out of fear of political pollution or out of jealousy is not clear. He has to bear with an unprincipled and totally incompetent deputy. Politicians are inaccessible, or go back on their word. Supposing he were to accept their offer of a special institute of his own: would he be able to continue his research, maintain the momentum of his career, make the contributions to pure science that his talents promise? He decides to take up biophysics, where at least he can start again from nothing, in his own way, and remain an honest scientist, uncorrupted by "social work" – ie, politics.

His depression, his sense of alienation, his poignant cry that he is "ALONE", have been felt by many a fine scientist leaving a centre of world science, willingly or unwillingly, to return to a home country at a much lower level of scientific development. I had a Spanish student, in the 1950s, who went through this experience. Until quite recently, many Indian scientists felt themselves to be in the same situation. They still talk that way in most Third World countries, if not so much now in Argentina and Brazil, and go back to America or Europe if they possibly can.

But Kapitza eventually realized that he was not free to go back. Like the brave and sensible man that he was, he came to terms with the situation, and drew upon his Cambridge experience to build up one of the finest research institutes in the Soviet Union, setting a standard for the advance of Soviet science to much higher levels than he could ever have hoped. But I suspect that the Nobel Prize that he was awarded, belatedly, in 1978 was not really for his discoveries in physics. Throughout his long life, in war and in peace, under increasing tyranny and in the subsequent thaw, he stood out for the humanity, integrity and scientific rationality that shines through his letters. He could not really cut himself off from "politics". On a number of occasions, where the welfare of science or of scientists was at stake, he stood up to Stalin, at the obvious risk of his life. In 1946, he refused to work on the Russian atomic bomb, at the cost of losing most of his positions and honours until after Stalin's death – a well-attested fact that Lawrence Badash treats as hearsay. He spoke boldly for freedom and reform in the Soviet Academy, and would not sign a public condemnation of Sakharov. That was not the object of retaining Kapitza in 1934 – but any country that gets the services of such a man should be so lucky.

Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, first published in 1926, has recently been re-issued (265pp. Free Association Books. £11.95. 0 946960 14 3). Robert M. Young writes in his foreword: "Whitehead looks at . . . the metaphysical foundations of modern science. He argues . . . that the system of abstractions which was created by the scientific revolution to serve us has got out of control."

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Policies of waste

Ljubo Sirc

ZBIGNIEW LANDAU and JERZY TOMASZEWSKI
The Polish Economy in the Twentieth Century
Translated by Wojciech Roszkowski
346pp. Croom Helm £25.
0 7099 1607 8

At the end of his introduction to this book, Derek Aldcroft, the editor of the series in which it appears, states that "despite the rapid economic progress made [in Poland] over the past 30 years, it is somewhat sad that the living standards of the population have not risen commensurately". This is no problem for Aldcroft because he thinks he knows the answer: "the socialist ethos of diverting a large share of resources to investment to ensure future productive potential . . .". Would the authors agree with this? At first glance, it would be hard to say. They painstakingly plough through the various periods in the history of the Polish economy without making their own views, let alone evaluations, very clear. Is this because they do not have any, or because they are afraid that they would otherwise have had difficulties to face in Warsaw, where they live and work? (We are not told whether the book has been published in Poland.)

Somewhat less than half the text is devoted to post-1945 Poland. The authors describe phenomena common to many communist countries: the Party did not initially admit what it was up to; food production covered only 60 per cent of the volume promised by the rationing system; agriculture was first collectivized and when this did not work partly decollectivized; industrial production was shifted from consumer goods to investment goods. Although supplies in the shops were irregular and long queues were the norm, the Marshall Plan was turned down by the Polish government because it was allegedly intended to restrain Communism in Europe. Although it is true that local unemployment centres were set up, recruitment was carried out in such a hasty and uncoordinated manner that productivity fell and manpower shortages became frequent.

Real wages in 1946 were 50 per cent below what they were in 1938. What happened to wages after 1946 the book cannot tell us: "it is very difficult to evaluate trends of nominal and real wages under the conditions of supply control and the rationing system . . . . In 1950 real wages increased by approximately 6 per cent as compared with 1949 but by 1953 diminished by the same rate. Abolishing supply control and the price and wage reform of January 1953 resulted in a further decrease in real wages of about 9 per cent." At the end of 1953 real wages began to rise slowly. According to the statistical tables in the book, real wages jumped by 11.6 per cent in 1956 and again by 8.3 per cent in 1957, but thereafter settled to a rise of about 1.5 per cent a year.

The need to reorganize the Polish economic system was evident as early as 1957, but the government continued to insist on the superiority of the planned economy. When stepping up investment did not improve living standards, it was admitted in 1966 that there were still serious shortcomings in the investment process. Working and living conditions were improving far too slowly.

In 1970 workers' demonstrations took place in a number of Polish towns. The solution was once again thought to be accelerated growth by means of more investment. The usual pressures and over-hasty decisions caused, in the authors words, "huge waste" and "immense indebtedness abroad". "The whole system was more and more disorganised." In spite of this, official statistics for the 1970s show real wages to have risen by approximately 4.5 per cent a year. The authors regard these figures as doubtful and add: "Even if these doubts are ignored, the appraisal of living conditions must take into account growing market shortages which appeared at the end of the period under consideration causing an immense loss of time for people waiting in queues or looking for necessary articles." At any rate, an economic crisis began and there were strikes in the summer of 1980.

The authors make it perfectly clear that the collapse of the Polish economy was not the consequence of an ordinary business cycle and was not imported from abroad, but was the product of a wrong economic policy. In a way, this is putting it mildly, because it was the communist system itself that did not provide any criteria for investment and instituted no responsibility for decisions. Whatever the vicissitudes of the Polish economic system between the two wars (described in the first part of the book), its meagre performance was certainly not preceded by any enormous expenditure in resources and manpower. Neither have post-war efforts ensured "future productive potential", as the editor of the series seems to believe. If they had, we would now be at the brink of an explosive rise in the living standard of the Polish people, but nobody in his right mind would today predict any such thing. Resources and labour have simply been wasted by the unwieldy communist machine.

What now? The authors talk somewhat obscurely about the need to remove the "real reasons" for the present crisis if it is to be overcome. They discuss "professional qualifications" of the Polish workers. These have indeed improved. But when will there ever be scope for them to be put to good use?

Markets of rejection

Arthur Seldon

EDWARD SMITHIES
The Black Economy in England since 1914
165pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. £15.
0 391 03114 7
PHILIP MATERRA
Off the Books: The rise of the underground economy
160pp. Pluto Press. £3.95.
0 86104 635 8

These two very different books serve to emphasize a development that is inadequately studied by academics and largely ignored by politicians. The neglect by academics is surprising; that by politicians is not, since the "black" market is ultimately a rejection of government. Yet it has been increasingly in evidence among rich and poor, in war and peace, boom and slump, East and West, under capitalism and socialism. People call it the "black" market in disapprobation; yet, because it offers emancipation from what can be seen as oppressive laws enforced in the false name of representative democracy, white (in the moral sense) might be as good a description.

Basing his research on five towns (Barnsley, Birkenhead, Brighton/Hove, London and Walsall), Edward Smithies, in his *The Black Economy in England since 1914*, surveys varying forms of "black" economy from tax evasion to crude theft from both public and private property. His book is well written, detailed and painstaking, if sometimes repetitive and indigestible. The profusion of detail (on fraud perpetrated in defiance of over-regulation as much as on tax evasion practised in defiance of over-taxation) might have supported more analysis of causes and trends – not least as to why the black/white market is often tolerated by an official blind eye and why it is sometimes ruthlessly repressed. But Dr Smithies's book recounts a chapter of social history largely overlooked by historians.

Philip Materra, a journalist "based" in New York, writes less from historical research than from political speculation. His *Off the Books* also is well written and it covers mainly the United States and Britain with (very) short chapters on Italy, the Third World, and the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland. Where Smithies is relatively dispassionate, Materra is more or less partisan. His analysis varies widely from the shrewd to the shallow. He sees the "underground" economy rightly as a revolt against government but wrongly as being directed solely against capitalist government; there is Marxist-flavoured bias here, since the "underground" is more extensive under socialism than under capitalism.

Two central issues are touched on in both books – the extent of the black/white market and its ultimate significance. Smithies refers to estimates of size *en passant*, whereas Materra assesses such calculations sceptically. Some estimates (not all quoted in these books) are large enough to shock academics into thought and governments into action: from Professor Edgar Feige's 33 per cent for the United States and 15 per cent for Britain (and 10–40 per cent for West Germany) to guesses for the socialist countries of 50 per cent or more. It is difficult, for example, to explain why Hungary has a higher living standard than the Soviet Union except by its wider tolerance of black/white markets. Official government estimates are not to be accepted uncritically. Politicians and bureaucrats are not neutral agents in the statistics business but vested interests with weapons to deploy or witnesses to conceal. The British semi-official 7.5 per cent could be read as being low enough to show that government has not lost control and high enough to warrant the expenditure of more resources in its detection and suppression. The latest and perhaps most sophisticated estimate, by Kent Matthews in the Liverpool Research Group *Quarterly Bulletin*, of 14.5 per cent or more for 1981–3, is near to Professor Feige's 15 per cent in *Economic Affairs* (July 1981). If the most overlooked, but least detectable, form of government rejection – cashless barter – is added, the total grows to 20–25 per cent. The implications make for furious thought: British official statistics record only 75–80 per cent of economic activity (plus whatever is added as the officially acknowledged black/white market); and macro-economic policy is defective not least because it is based on incomplete statistics. Is it not time we followed the Italians in revising them upward to allow for the large and, I would say, still growing "underground"?

In the ferment of re-thinking on all sides, the liberal New Right seems to be converging with the anti-statist New Left to challenge the thinkers of all parties and all ages who have seen the State as the creator of liberty, prosperity and peace. The New Right sees it as the enemy at worst, a necessary evil at best, that has far outgrown its province and competence. The ultra-New Left which, even among Marxists, is de-centralist, is railing against the Statist Left, old and new, including the Fabians, for aggrandizing the State. The common people are spurning the State by escaping to the market. Yet the most resourceful and inventive are proscribed and outlawed by conservative orthodoxy. The first step for the Whig Conservatives and the Social Democrats in Britain could be an amnesty for all who have been driven "underground" by over-zealous government.

Monetarism, in other words

Patrick Minford

THOMAS WILSON
Inflation, Unemployment, and the Market
Edited by M. C. MacLennan
272pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
0 19 828468 3

Thomas Wilson, recently retired from the Adam Smith Chair of Political Economy at Glasgow University, is one of those British economists who have fought a rearguard action against the increasing dominance of mathematical and statistical methods in economics. His own method, as *Inflation, Unemployment, and the Market* makes very clear, is essentially that of the historian, concerned to chronicle events in their proper sequence with attention to the particular features of each. Theories have their place, as a potential way of finding regularities; but they are not theories in the modern sense of attempts to deduce hypotheses from strictly limited assumptions about preferences and technology. And if regularities cannot be found, so much the worse for theory; we must just muddle on and be sensible in our judgments and policy prescriptions.

This approach is highly unfashionable now among economists, and I have to admit that personally I am most uncomfortable with it. Furthermore, I am in profound disagreement with many of the views advanced in this book, a collection of Professor Wilson's papers prefaced and edited by one of his colleagues, M. C. MacLennan.

There are undoubted strengths in his approach. First, the knowledge of facts and of history itself. Wilson's essay on the Great Depression is a good example: a balanced assessment of the roles of monetary policy, fiscal policy and stock-market collapse, informed by both macroeconomic understanding and careful chronology. Second, the breadth of interest in economic issues. Wilson is an economist, not "micro" or "macro" or whatever, and he writes on everything from oligopoly through oil pricing to stagflation. Third, the sceptical awareness of intellectual fallibility. The ideas that are today regarded as "sound economics" can only too easily be seen tomorrow as scholastic irrelevancies, and the economist must always therefore be tolerant of alternative insights, if only to guard his back.

Wilson's hero is Dennis Robertson. This becomes apparent in the macroeconomic essays, where we are given a vision of an economy in which money is of great importance but where markets function in a "fix price" manner (ie, with prices responding slowly, and not at all in the very short term, to changes in demand and supply), giving rise to large potential instability. Into this vision, when it is applied to the post-war context, intrude the trade unions, whom Wilson blames for a poor inflation-unemployment trade-off; in a further essay he identifies generous unemployment benefits as having given them further encouragement. He then rightly argues that the existence of three-and-a-half million unemployed cannot be blamed on misperceptions or lags in the operation of monetary policy. His conclusion from all this is both that "rational expectations monetarism" is wrong and that the unemployment rate can only be reduced (without accelerating inflation) by drastic union reform. Yet this is in broad outline a monetarist analysis, and Wilson never explains clearly why his theoretical position is any different from monetarism. The existence of unions, or "real wage rigidity" or "contracts" ("fix"-prices) does not conflict with monetarist theory or even with rational expectations, though it does alter transmission mechanisms. Furthermore, by his own analysis three-and-a-half million unemployed are *not* the result of monetary contraction but of a rise in the "natural rate" of unemployment (through union activity, etc).

The truth is that Wilson's macroeconomics, like Robertson's, is elusive. Neither of them believes in "models"; but this works against proper understanding of what they do believe. A model at least has the advantage of forcing a precise expression of views on how the economy works. The same vagueness attaches to Wilson's views on stabilization, the welfare state and devaluation. Often he is tantalizingly close to achieving a firm understanding, but shies away from it. For example, he notes the rise in welfare spending and the rise in unemployment but fails to explain the connection, even though he explains later how incentives to work have been eroded by taxes and benefits. Devaluation and stabilization may be useful, we are told; but we don't want too much of either.

Why cannot the virtues of economists such as Wilson and those of econometricians be combined, when both have something to learn from the other? Probably many will enjoy this book and nod away in agreement at various points; but the easy style should not blind them to a certain lack of intellectual sinew.

Developing Countries in the International Economy: Selected papers by Sanjaya Lall has recently been reissued in paperback (263pp. Macmillan. £7.95. 0 333 28875 0). The papers, as the author notes in his preface, are principally concerned with the multinational or transnational corporation and in particular with the external relations of manufacturing industry. Among the topics considered are "Dependence and Underdevelopment", "Food Transnationals and Developing Countries" and "Developing Countries as Exporters of Industrial Technology".

In the logical vestibule

W.V.Quine

DESMOND MACHALE
George Boole: His life and work
303pp. Dublin: Boole Press. $24.95.
0906783062

Modern logic – alias symbolic, alias mathematical – surpasses medieval logic somewhat as modern physics surpasses medieval conceptions of nature. Unlike physics, however, logic scarcely stirred from its medieval torpor until the nineteenth century. George Boole (1815–64) is commonly singled out as the awakener, and this is what his name means to many of us today. Algebraists and computer engineers know his name as the stem of an adjective, for Boolean algebra has figured in their work. It stems from Boole's logic.

Boole was born of poor and honest parents in Lincoln in 1815. His father was a shoemaker and an earnest student of science, mathematics and languages. Thus encouraged, young George was a voracious reader of science, history, fiction and poetry. He had vigorous schooling, strong in Latin and Greek. The need to support his parents and sisters, after his father became incapacitated, precluded a university education. He became a schoolmaster, developed strong ideas on education, and at length established a school of his own.

From boyhood onward he wrote verse. He published five stanzas of translation from the Greek that seemed too good for a boy of fourteen, and was consequently accused of fraud. A vitriolic exchange ensued in the newspaper between able young Boole and his unjust accuser, continuing longer than one could wish. It was not Boole's last involvement in hostile exchanges.

Desmond MacHale presents ample samples of Boole's early and late verse and quotes the critic and poet Seán Lucy at length to supplement his own critical judgment of them. They are decidedly competent, sometimes successfully lyrical, often sentimental, usually moralistic and religious. Boole was much concerned with religion and came near to choosing the career of minister. He was active in civic affairs and organizations, and his addresses on public occasions have the ring of sermons.

In 1849 he moved to Ireland as professor of mathematics at the newly established Queen's College in Cork. The president of the college got on badly with some of the professors, and Boole was impelled by his sense of righteousness to take the lead in the dispute. There ensued, again, a scandalous exchange in the newspaper, and a royal inquiry. Otherwise his fifteen years at Cork were successful, productive, rich in honours, and marked by a happy and prolific marriage to Mary Everest, niece of the eponym of the celebrated mountain. Boole sickened and died at the age of forty-nine.

Over the years he conferred and corresponded frequently with learned contemporaries, especially Arthur Cayley and Augustus De Morgan. MacHale provides biographical sketches of these and others of Boole's associates. He gives a fascinating account of Boole's widow, whose collected works fill four volumes. She was learned, opinionated, eccentric, religious and something of a mystic. She espoused homoeopathic medicine and dabbled in mesmerism.

We are given an impressive record also of Boole's five daughters and their husbands and progeny to the fourth and current generation. They include three mathematicians of some distinction, the Marxist biologist Howard Everest Hinton, and the physicist Sir Geoffrey Ingram Taylor. The best known of the clan was Boole's youngest daughter, Ethel Lillian Voynich. Her long and adventurous life, 1864–1960, peaked in a spectacularly successful novel, *The Gadfly*. We are told that it has sold 5 million copies in the Soviet Union alone, and has been translated into thirty-odd languages.

We learn from MacHale's biography that Boole left more to the mathematicians than logic. An early and important contribution was the theory of operators, a philosophically interesting flight of mathematical abstraction. Various operators are familiar to us all: the minus sign, the square-root sign, the operator "log" of logarithms, the "sin" "cos" and "tan" of trigonometry. Now operator theory is a matter of so handling certain operators as to simulate multiplication, as if $-x$, $\sqrt{x}$, $\log x$, and $\sin x$ were products, like $5x$. The fiction would be unproductive in these cases, but it works neatly for operators in the differential calculus, short-cutting manipulations and abetting intuition.

This was one of Boole's many contributions to the differential calculus, on which he produced two books. A related topic on which he wrote an influential book late in his short life was the calculus of finite differences. MacHale sees Boole also as the founder of the mathematical theory of invariants, which somewhat underlay Cayley's group theory and matrix theory.

MacHale treats fairly sparingly of mathematics and generously of the human side. He falls in with the tradition, however, of representing Boole as the father of modern logic. It is a tradition that had its beginnings almost in Boole's day, but we are able nowadays to view matters in truer perspective.

Boole's logic – *Laws of Thought* (1854) – was an algebra of classes modelled on arithmetic.

Boole as a young man, taken from the book reviewed here.

The product xy of classes x and y was their common part. Their sum $x + y$ was the aggregate of all members of either, provided that they had none in common. Their difference $x - y$ comprised the members of x not in y, provided that y was part of x. 0 was the empty class, and 1 was the class of everything.

Leibniz had already been tinkering with symbols to somewhat the same effect before 1700, and in the intervening six generations the idea had been taken up by Bernoulli, Castillon, Holland, Lambert, Ploucquet, Segner and Tönnies in varying degrees.

Boole's algebra was better than its precursors, but it had its faults. He was trapped in arithmetical analogies. The solving of equations for an unknown was for him a major concern. In logic the solution is usually marred by an indefinite residue, reminiscent of the integral calculus. Fractions entered into Boole's solution procedures (x/y, $0/0$, $1/0$), arithmetical vestiges without straightforward logical interpretation. Boole carried indefinite terms to bizarre length when he formulated "All y are x" as "$y=vx$" and explained v as an indefinite class; for a clear formulation of "All y are x" was already available in "$y = yx$". Or, if he wanted to exclude the case where y exhausts x, he could have added "$y \neq x$"; curiously, however, he held to equations and shunned inequalities.

Boole's deference to arithmetical analogy is most conspicuous in his restrictions on logical addition and subtraction; by allowing only mutually exclusive classes as addends and only subclasses as subtrahends, he ensured that the size of the class $x + y$ be the arithmetical sum of the sizes of the classes x and y and that the size of $x - y$ be their arithmetical difference.

The logically useful versions of $x + y$ and $x - y$ are free of those restrictions; $x - y$ simply comprises all members of x not in y, and $x + y$ comprises everything in x or y or both. This version of $x + y$ had already been entertained before Boole, and it was reinstated by William Stanley Jevons when he improved Boole's logic ten years later. It engenders the symmetries so characteristic of our familiar Boolean algebra. We only then get "$x + x = x$", parallel to Boole's prized "$xx = x$", and we only then get the full pair of De Morgan's laws (1858), namely, that the negation of the class $x + y$ is the negation of x times that of y and the negation of xy is the negation of x plus that of y. Jevons transmuted Boole's algebra into Boolean algebra. But MacHale looks askance.

Jevons' attitude toward mathematics was a very narrow one and in fact he never quite got away from the mistaken impression that symbolic algebra is merely a representation of numerical arithmetic.

Jevons showed mathematical sensitivity, I protest, in appreciating how Boole was hobbled by numerical analogy.

There is an important and enduring feature of Boolean algebra, however, to which Boole was led by numerical analogy, namely, his *law of development*. It serves to resolve the terms of a Boolean polynomial into their minimal intersections, and it was suggested to Boole by Taylor's theorem in algebra. Happily Boole's unfortunate restriction on logical addition was no obstacle to the law of development.

He noted that his algebra of classes could be reinterpreted as a logic of sentences by construing the product, sum and difference as expressing the compounding of sentences by the conjuctions "and", "or" and "but not". He linked this interpretation to the class interpretation by lamely associating each sentence with a class of moments: the times when it is true. There is a better way of linking the interpretations: we can associate each class with a sentence affirming membership in it.

The Boolean algebra of sentences, when cleared of crotchets and limbered up in sundry ways, is the truth-function logic that occupies the first two weeks of a modern logic course. If my earlier remarks have blurred Boole's father image, the prehistory of truth-function logic blurs it further. The Stoics were pretty well embarked on truth-function logic in the third century BC, and their ideas were pushed further by scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Petrus Hispanus and William of Ockham even stated De Morgan's laws, for sentences. But the nineteenth-century historians misinterpreted these developments and the nineteenth-century logicians were unaware of them. Łukasiewicz set the record straight in 1935.

Boole's sentence logic and class logic were parallel interpretations, and he kept them apart. His equations in class logic were themselves sentences, but he kept them clear of the sentential operations, never so much as writing the negation of an equation. If instead we apply the one system to the other, we get truth functions of Boolean equations. This makes for a very substantial chapter of modern logic, outrunning Boolean algebra proper; it is tantamount to monadic quantification theory, or the logic of one-place predicates. In his *Begriffsschrift* (1879), Gottlob Frege covered all that and much more. The whole of quantification theory or predicate logic, monadic and polyadic, sprang full grown from Frege's brow. Influence upon Frege of Boole and his followers is not evident.

General quantification theory is the full technique of "all", "some" and pronominal variables, and it is what distinguishes logic's modern estate. Charles Sanders Peirce arrived at it independently four years after Frege. Peirce's work did indeed take off from that of Boole, De Morgan and Jevons. Ernst Schröder and Giuseppe Peano built in turn on Peirce's work, while Frege's continued independently and unheeded.

The avenue from Boole through Peirce to the present is one of continuous development, and this, if anything, is the justification for dating modern logic from Boole; for there had been no comparable influence on Boole from his more primitive antecedents. But logic became a substantial branch of mathematics only with the emergence of general quantification theory at the hands of Frege and Peirce. I date modern logic from there.

Frege got there first. His initial and succeeding contributions were richer and more refined, moreover, than any other logical work until the present century, when the current from Boole through Peirce and the current from Frege converged. Thus I have long hailed Frege as the founder of modern logic, and viewed Boole, De Morgan and Jevons as forerunners. John Venn and Lewis Carroll also belong back with them, though coming on the scene only after the great event.

The differences concerned here are vast. Monadic quantification theory, though transcending Boole's logic, cannot cope with inferences that depend essentially on relations, as opposed to classes; it cannot derive "Heads of horses are heads of animals" from "Horses are animals", to cite De Morgan's example. Moreover, monadic quantification theory is meagre enough to admit of a complete algorithm; that is, formulas can be mechanically checked for validity (Löwenheim, 1915). On the other hand general quantification theory takes relational reasoning in its stride, and that is where true logical complexity lurks. Like other rich branches of mathematics, it is demonstrably insusceptible to a complete algorithm (Turing and Church, 1936). The escarpment between what I am calling modern logic and what went before is bold indeed.

MacHale does more than justice to Boolean algebra:

Within mathematics and logic the Boolean algebra . . . encompasses and unifies such topics and concepts as sets, binary numbers, truth tables, probability spaces, syllogisms, two-state systems, electronic circuits and computer technology. Wittingly or unwittingly, Boole had discovered a new kind of mathematics – a kind of mathematics suitable for, and indeed essential for, computers, information storage and retrieval.

He quotes Garrett Birkhoff in a similar if more restrained vein.

In the case of electric circuits the debt to Boolean algebra is clear enough: Claude Shannon's correlation of electric circuits with Boolean polynomials or truth functions enables engineers to simplify circuits by simplifying the polynomials. Computer programming is likewise beholden to Boolean algebra, as to further reaches of logic. But much of what MacHale ascribes to Boolean algebra is just the perennial service of our ubiquitous "and", "or" and "not", available independently of the codification of those three particles under the name of Boolean algebra.

The thriving field of abstract algebra developed largely from Boole's work, first in the theory of invariants and then in logic. Boolean algebra lives on as a handy specimen for abstract algebraists, being so simple a structure and so easily modelled. Ironically, its very familiarity in those circles led ill-informed mathematicians to belittle modern logic as a trivial pursuit, unaware as they were of the logical edifice to which Boolean algebra is the merest vestibule.

There was more in Boole's *Laws of Thought*. There was a probability calculus, which fitted neatly with his logic. Just as 0, 1, and $1 - x$ in his logic were the empty class, the universe, and the negation or complement of the class x, so in probability theory they were impossibility, certainty, and the probability complementary to the probability x. Sums and products fell nicely into place as compounded probabilities.

Much of *Laws of Thought* is given over to inconclusive psychological generalities: for the declared overall purpose was an analysis of rational thinking. Boole even included a chapter on theology.

In treating of logic at such length in this review I have strayed far from MacHale's book, which is more strictly biographical. My concern has been to counter a distorted view, old-fashioned but still widespread, of Boole's place in modern logic.

Practical Inferences, by D. S. Clarke, Jr, has recently been published (173pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95. 0 7102 0415 9). Professor Clarke starts with the relatively simple inference patterns used in everyday prudential decisions, and then "extends a basic structural framework to the more complex inferences used in assessing probabilities, and finally to moral inferences", seeking in this way to reveal fundamental similarities in what have been regarded as disparate activities. Discussing recent work by writers like G. E. M. Anscombe, A. Kenny, W. Sellars and G. H. von Wright, Clarke argues that at all levels of decision-making the practical inferences used contain at least one premiss expressing the desires or preferences of the agent. This, he believes, is in opposition to "the dominant view in Western philosophy that desires must be regarded or evaluated by means of principles of conduct discovered by special rational procedures".

Epic beginnings

E. J. Kenney

OTTO SKUTSCH (Editor)
The Annals of Q. Ennius
848pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £45.
0 19 814482

For Cicero, whose judgment of his great contemporaries Lucretius and Catullus was coloured by his contempt for Epicurus and his distaste for the "new" poetry, Ennius was Rome's greatest poet: *summus poeta noster*. For Quintilian, a century and a half later, he was an ancient monument: "Ennius we should worship as we do groves haltowed by age, whose huge old oaks now strike us as more venerable than beautiful." What had happened in the interval was that what Ennius had to offer had been absorbed, above all through Virgil, into the bloodstream of Roman literature and the poetry itself rendered expendable. His great epic, the *Annales*, told in eighteen books the history of Rome from her foundation to 171 BC. Of this vast fabric we have fragments amounting in bulk to about one-twentieth: some 600 lines, half-lines, phrases and single words. Many owe their survival less to their poetic merit than to their technical interest as rarities to be captured and impaled by the grammatical lepidopterists of later antiquity. Yet these curiosities, when interpreted as they are here by a scholar of Otto Skutsch's calibre, may be as revealing of Ennius' real importance for the history of Latin poetry as the brazen resonances of "moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque" or "unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem".

The young Ovid styled Ennius *arte carens*, deficient in technique. He of all poets should have known better, for Ennius' claim to fame is precisely that he introduced to Italy poetic technique as understood and practised by the Greeks. The *Annales* made a decisive break with the existing tradition of Roman epic by discarding the native Saturnian for the alien hexameter; and Ennius' attitude to language – implied by his preference for the Greek *poeta* or "maker" over the Latin *vates* or "prophet" – was creative, innovative, manipulative, combinatory, in a word, Hellenistic. It is indeed Ennius rather than Propertius or Ovid who has first claim to the title of the Roman Callimachus. What, one wonders, was the reaction of the first readers of the *Annales*, fresh from Naevius, on encountering the sonorous invocation to "Musae, quae pedibus magnum pulsatis Olympum"? The poet himself can have had no real idea of the magnitude and fundamental character of what was neither more nor less than a revolution in the history of European literature.

Some manifestations of Ennian *ars* found more favour than others. One which "took off" was frag 584 Sk "premitur pede pes atque armis arma teruntur" (in Vahlen's restoration), "foot is pressed by foot and weapons grind on weapons". In the Homeric original the reference was to troops drawn up in close order. Ennius, whether independently or (as would be characteristic) influenced by a lost Hellenistic poet, reworked the idea into an image of close combat; and the composite formula was in turn taken up and varied by a sequence of poets from Furius Bibaculus to Silius Italicus. Conversely the next three fragments (585–7) chance to illustrate an experiment which fell flat: the truncation, again on the Homeric model, of the last word of the verse, as in *altisonum cael(um)*. The difference between the cases is one of degree only, for here too Ennius was following Hellenistic adaptations of the device, such as Antimachus' *ops* for *opsis*. To Ausonius, our source for these examples, in the fourth century an this naturally sounded bizarre; by contemporary Greek standards it was hardly even avant-garde.

Ennius proclaimed himself (frag 209) *dicti studiosus*, which is Latin for *philologus*; in spelling *boantes* as *bouantes* (frag 594) to indicate the etymological connection (true or false matters not) with *bos*, he was playing precisely the same sort of tricks with language as those played later by the Augustans, not least Ovid, possibly with greater finesse but not more faithfully to the spirit of Alexandria. Moreover, as Skutsch's commentary illustrates, the Latin language was still relatively fluid; the variations in gender under which my generation groaned in its passage through Kennedy represent the residue of much wider uncertainties. To perfect a hexametrical *Kunstsprache* from these materials was to be the work of two centuries and several poets of genius; it was Ennius who blazed the trail.

As a national epic the *Annales* was superseded by the *Aeneid*: it lives on through what Skutsch calls its "all-pervasive influence" on the work of later poets – the tribute paid by them to the founder of a Roman tradition of high philological craftsmanship which ruled down to the end of classical antiquity. Skutsch's magisterial edition makes it possible to appraise accurately the contribution of this (apparently) self-taught genius, for whom Latin was a second if not a third or even fourth language, to the development of Latin poetry. To edit fragments is one of the severest tests of a scholar's capabilities. Housman, in a just but merciless review of Friedrich Marx's Lucilius wrote that "An editor of Lucilius or Ennius or Nonius . . . . unless he is grievously self-deluded, must know that the greater number of his corrections, and of his explanation also, are false." Those words must often have echoed in Skutsch's mind since he first embarked, over forty years ago, on this monumental enterprise: it is to Housman, along with three other great Latinists, Franz Skutsch, Eduard Fraenkel and W. M. Lindsay, that the book is dedicated.

At least for Ennius the outlines and much of the detail of his narrative are known from the historical sources, but the room for doubt remains as vast as the extent and the variations in quality of the evidence. This is a task which can be responsibly undertaken only by a scholar conversant not merely with the entire range of Greek and Latin literature proper but also with the vaguries of the grammatical and exegetical tradition – itself a thing of shreds and patches – parasitic upon it. "Definitive" is a term not to be used lightly of a work of scholarship; if the combination of learning, acuteness, circumspection, resource, wit and judgment sanctions the word, this edition is definitive. Vahlen's fine edition of 1903 is superseded: in the shorthand so dear to the hearts of scholars "386 V" gives place to "376 Sk". It will be many years before the time comes for "Sk" in its turn to yield to a worthy successor.

The plot's the thing

Erich Segal

NIALL W. SLATER
Plautus in Performance: The theatre of the mind
190pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £26.90.
0 691 06624 8
GIANNA PETRONE
Teatro antico e inganno: Finzioni plautine
218pp. Palermo: Palumbo. L18,000.

Plautus is again in fashion. Although Rome's great comic playwright was revered in antiquity (eg, by Varro, Cicero, Aulus Gellius) and the Renaissance (Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Molière), his star fell in later ages when scholars began to eulogize the virtues of his lost Greek models and damn the Latin poet for debasing them. Scarcely more than a generation ago, the commonly held view was epitomized in Gilbert Norwood's remark that Plautus was "the worst of all writers who ever won popular repute". And this despite the appearance in 1922 of Eduard Fraenkel's magisterial *Plautinisches im Plautus*, which argued – from sheer philological intuition – that Plautus had artfully elaborated and reshaped his Greek originals, creating something that was, if strange, at least rich in itself. Fraenkel saw the Roman poet as using his Greek model less as a bedrock than a springboard. But most classicists still remained unconvinced that Plautus had any real claim to originality.

Then suddenly in mid-century, great portions of Menandrian drama emerged from the sands of Egypt. The papyri were a major discovery, and a minor disappointment. By 1972, when Menander appeared as a full-fledged Oxford text, it had become increasingly difficult to justify what Goethe (on the basis of short fragments) had called the "unattainable charm" of the Greek playwright. Though he was capable of subtle psychological characterizations, he was not very theatrical and certainly not comic. Indeed, the sedateness of his bourgeois drama seemed to explain why Menander won so few prizes in his own lifetime. Some Hellenists privately regretted the arrival of this overpraised literary Godot.

But the tide had already begun to turn in 1968 with the publication of Eric Handley's *Menander and Plautus: A Study in comparison*, which produced a reconstruction of the actual Menandrian model for a scene in Plautus' *Bacchides*. For the first time since antiquity, a direct comparison of the two playwrights was possible and the nature of Latin *vortere* (the verb Plautus used to describe his process of rendering the Greek) assessed. The conclusions affirmed the brilliance of Fraenkel's conjectures. Plautus had indeed amplified the slave roles, adding verbal pyrotechnics and lyrics to what were fairly bland iambs in the original. In Handley's words, Plautus "likes his colours stronger, his staging more obvious, his comedy more comic". The Roman playwright was suddenly freed from the dungeon for treasonous translators and crowned an artist in his own right. With rare exceptions, the trend in recent criticism has been towards discovering new facets of his creativity.

Both Niall W. Slater's *Plautus in Performance* and Gianna Petrone's *Teatro antico e inganno* examine Plautus' innovative techniques and share a unique feature – the identical argument. Near simultaneity of publication suggests coincidental, independent inspiration, but the fact remains that they are as similar as the Menaechmi twins.

Their basic thesis (one may speak in the singular for both books) is that the essence of Plautus is self-conscious theatricality. While the comic device of a play calling attention to itself as a play is as ancient as Aristophanes and as modern as Beckett, the abundance of theatrical references in Plautus is quite amazing. Slater suggests that this is because Plautus began his career as an actor. But this does not really explain the phenomenon. For Shakespeare's imagery is, as Caroline Spurgeon noted, conspicuous for the *paucity* of allusions to his professional life. By contrast, Plautus' plays are about the writing of his plays; his characters are either authors, actors or spectators. In Petrone's words, "Plauto ha teatralizzato, quindi fatto entrare nella rappresentazione, il suo stesso modo di fare teatro."

Slater chooses to call this style of dramaturgy "metatheatre", a term which also appears in the pages of Petrone, who argues that the plot is the "plot" in Plautus, ie, his plays all centre around a *fallacia* which becomes totally integrated with the *fabula* itself: "Ne consegue un effetto di raddoppiamento e una struttura ad incastro." Comedy is a trickery of trickeries. The French *intrigue* shares both connotations and derives from the Latin *intricare*, one of Plautus' cornucopia of words for bamboozlement. (Both Slater and Petrone emphasize that the primary quality of the Roman *ludus* is deluding.)

The authors also note how Plautine characters mock convention with quips such as, "I'll not act like your typical old man in the theatre", or "We won't do this the way they do in other comedies." Braggart soldiers decline to brag; running slaves refuse to sprint. Characters even exchange stock roles.

But most important is the quintessential Plautine hero, the slave who is also the playwright. This is, of course, a comic *topos*. Beaumarchais's Figaro took up the pen ("le théâtre me parut un champ d'honneur") before taking up the razor. And yet in Plautus it is an organic motif.

His most famous bondsman, Pseudolus, when momentarily lost for a scheme to swindle money to free his young master's girl-friend from the pimp's clutches, says explicitly that he will create a plot out of thin air – *quasi poeta*. And every character in the play seems to refer to *nugas theatri*. The analogy is often merely implied, but it is almost always there. Indeed, in the *Casina*, the single Plautine comedy in which a woman holds centre stage, the *matrona* is openly acknowledged as today's dramatist. The maid praises her mistress's plan to trap her wayward husband:

> Nec fallaciam astutiorem ullus fecit
> poeta atque ut haec est fabre facta ab nobis.
>
> No playwright has ever fashioned a sharper plot
> than this one we've so professionally produced.

Petrone also calls attention to this passage to substantiate her equation of *fallacia* and *fabula*.

The authors differ somewhat in their explanations of Plautus' all-pervasive "metatheatricality". Petrone sees it as an evolution which began with tragedy, especially the Euripidean monologue in which the character addresses himself by name. This may be seen as early as *Medea*, but the comic devices become far more prominent in plays like *Iphigenia in Tauris* with its *fallaciae* and remarks like "never trust a Greek" (shades of Shaw on the English!) Slater also notes the Euripidean influence but gives it less emphasis. He prefers to see Plautus as parodying Hellenistic literary comedy as well as the conventions of South Italian farce. The latter is evident in the many scenes he designates as "literary imitation of improvised theatre" – the dramatic equivalent of a transcribed cadenza.

But his zeal sometimes carries him too far. For example, Chrysalus, the clever slave in the *Bacchides*, boasts he is so resourceful that "your Parmenos and Syruses mean nothing to me!" Not only is he deriding the stock slaves of Greek comedy in general, but, as Handley's essay now demonstrates, the name of the servant in the model for this very play was, in fact, Syrus. Slater remarks, "It is the very paradigm of metatheatre, a character arguing with his own Ur-text."

But herein lies the problem: how many people in Plautus' huge audience knew Menander's play? How many for that matter knew more than a smattering of Greek picked up from army service during the First Punic War? Granted there are some scholars like Bruno Gentili who believe that Hellenistic culture was more widespread in Italy at this time than is commonly accepted. But it is still expecting a great deal from a crowd of unruly, drunken Romans (as Horace describes the festival audience) to have the remotest acquaintance with a text of a refined Athenian dramatist.

There is a good Elizabethan analogy. Francis Beaumont's broadly farcical *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, with its near-verbatim parody of Hotspur's speech quoted by a would-be actor as a "huffing part", was, according to the preface to its first printing, "utterly rejected" by the public. Plebeians do not appreciate metatheatre; groundlings get no joy from intertextuality.

Despite their basic similarity, these books still have certain distinguishing features. Petrone ranges further back into stage history and forward into modern criticism (Shklovsky, Propp, Detienne, Vernant, Questa). Slater has a wonderful gift of being able to see the comedies in his mind's eye. He practises "performance criticism" often with felicitous results. He also makes a persuasive argument for the increasing importance of metatheatricality in the later plays (culminating in the *Pseudolus*).

Both these books show enormous enthusiasm for their subject and should be warmly welcomed. For the comedy of Plautus is important. As Mikhail Bakhtin observed, "The Romans taught all European cultures how to laugh."

Catullus by John Ferguson (363pp. Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press. $25. 0 87291 158 6) contains commentaries by the author on each of Catullus' surviving 113 poems, together with individual bibliographies for the poems.

Sybilline strainings

Jonathan Keates

ITALO CALVINO
Collezione di sabbia: Emblemi bizzarri e inquietanti del nostro passato e del nostro futuro gli oggetti raccontano il mondo
219pp. Milan: Garzanti. L18,000.

The guilty feeling that it ought to have an intellectual community, to rival Sartrean Paris or the Frankfurt School, continues to bedevil Italy. Something is, we are anxiously assured, wrong with a country which cannot produce a Benjamin or an Adorno, and the cause is usually found in that lack of seriousness, that shallow frivolity, of which Italians, understandably keen to obviate criticism from outside, are quick to accuse themselves. It needs a certain hardihood to suggest that modern Italian cultural life may have been substantially harmed by this delusion, and even greater courage to imply that Italy, with its limitless popular resources of acuity and imagination, is probably better off without intellectuals.

Among the more obvious and depressing symptoms of this craving has been the growth in the past decade of a species of Delphic journalism, whose writers are summoned to make oracular pronouncements on everything from post-modernism to soccer. The vatic voices in the pages of *La Repubblica*, *L'Espresso*, *Panorama* or *La Stampa* are nearly always the same comforting presences, whose gentle chidings lend them the air of elderly schoolmasters. There is no need for independent thought if Giorgio Bocca and Enzo Biagi can crystallize what you think you felt but weren't sure how to express. And of Umberto Eco, the most successful incarnation of the *feuilletoniste* as sybil, it is needless to speak. Novelists have occasionally joined the band. Alberto Arbasino forsook a promising career in fiction to become a professional *laudator temporis acti* on the culture pages of *Repubblica*, reminding us that the performance we missed thirty years ago was always better than what we are seeing now. Even Italo Calvino, having sought refuge in Paris from the dreary politicization of Italy in the 1970s, has failed to resist the lure of the new shamanism and here, alas, is *Collezione di sabbia* to prove it.

Judging from most of these articles, there is a clearly defined type of subject matter which the editors of *Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera* and *FMR* deem Calvinesque. The author of *Marcovaldo* and *Il barone rampante* is not to be canvassed for his views on anything so banal as Signor Craxi's position on index-linked earnings or the outrages of the Camorra, but it is always nice to hear from him on dragons, waxwork, fairies, imaginary stamps, Trajan's Column, Roman pigsties and Roland Barthes. The appearance of Barthes in this *galère* is actually something of a surprise, falling as he does between an article on an exhibition of drawings by nineteenth-century French writers and a piece on the aerial sculptures of Fausto Melotti. Calvino's obituary tribute to his friend is brief and dignified, ending with one of those wholly untranslatable manoeuvres of a regiment of abstract nouns ("questa gnoseologia estetica o eudemonismo del capire" gives a flavour of the thing) which give warning that an Italian writer has mounted Pegasus but is having a spot of bother with the reins.

Barthes's presence offers a clue to the nature of this sandy collection. He is, after all, the classic example of a mind in whom "the readiness is all", and whose omniscience the Delphic journalism has sought to emulate, mostly without success. Calvino approaches each subject with his customary stylistic elegance and charm, and is wonderfully absorbed by *quipu* knots, the meaning of Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People", the relationship between language and script, or the hideous reproductions of freak physiology in Dr Spitzner's anatomico-ethnological waxworks.

Yet, once allowing himself to stray beyond observation and description, he ends, like others of his kind, among the dull municipal flowerbeds of platitude. At the close of his delightfully enthusiastic account of *Scrittori che disegnano* we are told that "the pursuit of an expressive horizon distinct from that of words is the impetus which fuels most of these pictograms drawn in the margins of handwritten pages". The conclusion reached here, as in the "art-derives-from-suffering" dialogue which ends an agreeable disquisition on Japanese gardens, lends the article a type of obtuse portentousness which it cannot adequately support.

Thus when, among the temples of Palenque in the Mexican jungle, Calvino, pausing to contemplate the synthesis between the forms of Mayan sculpture and the growths of the forest, pictures the tangled branches entering his brain and notes that "among the ramifications of argument I seem to catch a glimpse now and then of a decisive opinion, which vanishes a moment later", we have the perfect image of the dilemma this kind of writing so frequently confronts. Nobody could reasonably question Calvino's ability to convey inimitably what he sees and understands: only when he feels called upon to think do we find ourselves wishing that we had seen the exhibition, read the book or visited the place for ourselves. The items in *Collezione di sabbia* will answer very well for the purpose of beguiling a wet Thursday afternoon in Milan, but their publication in book form is merely an embarrassing display of the foppery of fame.

High and low

Margaret FitzHerbert

CHISTOPHER HIBBERT
Rome, the Biography of a City
387pp. Viking. £14.95.
0 670 80129 1

In writing *Rome, the Biography of a City*, Christopher Hibbert has returned to an earlier idea. Nearly twenty years ago he wrote a history of London in an identical format, although for a different publisher. Presumably the book was a success since it ran into two editions. But the idea itself was not, and is not, good. Both books fall between three stools: that of popular history, of tourist guide, and of coffee-table book. Mr Hibbert has a good story to tell and has no need to clutter his text with pictures. The pictures (all monochrome) are not particularly well chosen or well reproduced; their provenance is not listed and their presence makes the book large and unwieldy.

Hibbert has a strong narrative gift and covers nearly 3,000 years of history, from the Etruscan Kings to Mussolini, in flowing, lucid prose. Although the story he has to tell is at the heart of Western civilization, it is above all a story of cruelty, corruption, greed and moral degradation. Founded in fratricide, the city survives from century to century, sacked, looted, conquered, occupied. But on the other side of the coin there is the history of human and artistic endeavour without parallel. And it is this piquant juxtaposition of high achievement and base depravity that Hibbert has depicted so well.

An excellent sense of selection enables the author to pass quickly but effectively over dull moments, leaving room for amusing or picturesque historical anecdote. He lingers where he chooses and is capricious about detail. He devotes a whole chapter to the eighteenth century, which was almost the only century of true tranquillity in Rome and which paradoxically was one of the least fruitful artistically. It is a charming leisurely chapter filled with colourful quotations from Charles de Brosses, Hazlitt, Boswell and Goethe.

Should the publisher bring out a smaller edition without illustrations, Hibbert might take his place beside Augustus Hare and Georgina Masson as an essential companion on a visit to Rome. Unfortunately, it is more likely that his book will be bought as a picture book and never read.

TIME & TIDE
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(Cheques should be made payable to Jermyn Publications Limited)

Dragon-maker

Roy Hattersley

P. J. KAVANAGH (Editor)
The Bodley Head G. K. Chesterton
488pp. Bodley Head. £12.95.
0 370 30579 5

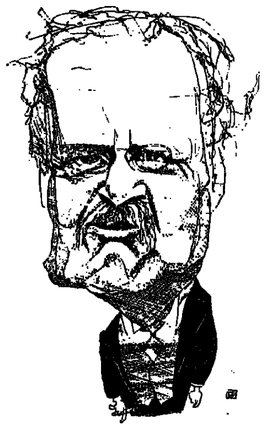
Gilbert Keith Chesterton was an addicted essayist. Of course, he was also a poet, a polemicist, a biographer, a historian, a perpetual chauvinist, an occasional antisemite, a professional journalist and an amateur theologian. But, his poetry aside, whatever he wrote turned out to be an essay or series of essays – narrative essays called short stories, biographical essays put together and called biographies, historical essays bound in the same volume and called histories. Each chapter of his longer books is complete, well rounded, discursive, didactic. Often he allows the essayist's personality to intrude in places where the historian or literary critic would never permit it to appear. Most significantly of all, he understands the importance of carrying his readers along on the strength of his language. Devotees of Father Brown will insist that the ingenuity of the plots and the subtlety of the characterizations hold them entranced. But when, in the mystery of *The Queer Feet*, we read that "In the heart of a plutocracy, tradesmen become cunning enough to be more fastidious than their customers", we recognize an author who struck a proper balance between style and substance – the essential mark of the true essayist.

Chesterton was also a man of generous disposition, and usually his natural happiness was reflected in what he wrote – another essential attribute of the successful essayist. "He seems", writes P. J. Kavanagh in his introduction to *the Bodley Head G. K. Chesterton*, "always to be addressing a large and friendly audience." That is something of an overstatement. But we ought not to complain when a Chesterton devotee exaggerates his idol's good nature. For when we read Chesterton's judgments on his own literary heroes, we applaud his affectionate reluctance to find fault. There is, in his assessment "Browning as a Literary Artist", a passage in which the subject of the biographical essays is compared to Wordsworth and Shelley:

> The *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* is a perfectly normal and traditional ode, and *Prometheus Unbound* is a perfectly genuine and traditional Greek lyrical drama. But if we study Browning honestly, nothing will strike us more than that he really created a large number of quite novel and quite admirable artistic forms.

Rivals for places in the pantheon of English poetry having been thus admonished for their comparative lack of originality, the panegyric sweeps on to applaud the personal as well as the poetic qualities of both the Brownings. I hope that it is more than my own admiration for that extraordinary couple which attracts me to Chesterton's account of their marriage. Even readers who are moved by neither the mystic wonder of Robert's poetry nor the strength of Elizabeth's character and the quality of her sonnets must be recruited to their cause by the succinct brilliance with which Chesterton described the liberation of the sick daughter from her father's domination. After a slightly self-conscious sub-Freudian analysis of their relationship he moves on to the stronger ground: "she took a much more cheerful view of death than her father did of life".

Not that Chesterton is invariably, and therefore tediously, in favour of everything and everybody. He asserts that "what attracts Mr Kipling to militarism is not the idea of courage but the idea of discipline", and he clearly disapproves of such an attraction. He classifies the aphorisms of Oscar Wilde with ruthless accuracy into the work of "the true humorist, . . . the charlatan, . . . the fine philosopher and . . . the tired quack". The notion that "Good intentions are invariably ungrammatical" he dismisses as "tame trash". Chesterton is instinctively against the popular and the fashionable, because he is on the side of the common man. Caught by "two excited policemen" while "throwing a big Swedish knife at a tree" he is gratified when "the leading constable became so genial and complimentary that he ended up by representing himself as a reader of my work". But he wonders "how he



would have got on" if he had not been the "guest at a big house". It is the possession of such instincts which makes it easy to forget his excesses.

This anthology contains only a dozen poems, and the excesses in that part of Chesterton's work are therefore omitted. But in his selection of prose, Mr Kavanagh rightly includes passages which show up the author's overwhelming (if forgivable) weakness. G. K. Chesterton overdid it – especially in support of favoured causes. In the excellent introduction we are reminded of the assaults on the Liberal Party establishment which he made on behalf of his dead brother, Cecil, who had sought to expose the corruption of the Marconi affair. In the text we are given an example of absurd determination to defend the period of medieval history when the Catholic Church occupied the position in society to which he would have liked it restored. In his *Short History of England* – written as the kindly light was leading him towards Rome – he observed in apparent seriousness that

> torture so far from being peculiarly medieval was copied from pagan Rome and its most natural political science. Its application to others besides slaves was really part of the slow medieval extinction of slavery. Torture indeed is a logical thing common to states innocent of fanaticism.

From his more sensible writing we know that Chesterton could not have tortured a worm – indeed, rather, if its shape, size and religion had attracted him, he might have announced that in truth it was a dragon. Overstatement was one of Chesterton's greatest pleasures. The pleasure that Chesterton took in life is wonderfully conveyed to the reader in P. J. Kavanagh's selection.

Prudential

When I was sacked from Uncle Chummy's Mail
(formerly Uncle Chummy's Letterbox)
for being tight – don't mind my telling you? –
I got the *Comfy Home*'s Miss Prudence page –
Problems and all that bilge, and Poetry.
'An incident occurred whereby some s • • • m
got in my mouth and then I swallowed it.
Can you get pregnant like this?' 'Do not fear
my young friend, I enclose some National Health
leaflets. . . .' and it goes on and on and on.

The Poem of the Week slot (10 quid prize)
helps boost a meagre salary – 'Content
of Telford, Mrs' wins most frequently,
or dour 'MacDonald (Mrs), Aberdeen'
('I'm really sure Our Lord and Billy Graham
Will put an end to all this horrid mayhem',
'To football hooglums' [sic] 'will come a day
When they repent that they have gone astray');
I chuck the other pratts straight in the bin –
hundreds of poor sad losers every week.

PETER READING

Super-gloss

Chris Baldick

IAN JACK and MARGARET SMITH (Editors)
The Poetical Works of Robert Browning
Volume One: "Pauline", "Paracelsus"
543pp. £45.
0 19 818937
Volume Two: "Strafford", "Sordello"
531pp. £48.
0 19 812317 5
Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Since the founding, within his own lifetime, of societies for the study of Browning's poetry, devotees of his work have enjoyed a reputation for collaborative endeavour, the outlandish erudition of their hero demanding efforts of mutual aid and even a team spirit among his interpreters. If they did not know what on earth Browning could mean by "Saponian", they could refer to Berdoe's *Browning Cyclopaedia* to find that this "literary riddle of the season" (during which months, one wonders, were such puzzles laid aside?) had been solved by "a country correspondent" to whom the poet himself had disclosed his meaning.

Yet where it really matters – in the production of a reliable annotated edition of Browning's works – this admirable spirit of co-operation has given way to sorrier scenes of rancour and missed opportunities. The "Ohio" edition which began to appear in 1969 was quickly condemned as inaccurate by, among others, the Canadian scholar John Pettigrew, who was himself at work in Ontario on his own edition of the poems, published posthumously by Penguin in 1981. The loss which his death at the age of forty-seven has meant for the world of literary scholarship can be appreciated by comparing his annotations with those made independently by Ian Jack in these first volumes of the altogether more lavish Oxford English Texts edition. Pettigrew's aims as an annotator were very modest compared with Jack's, but it is noticeable how often he picks up an echo missed by the Oxford editor: in *Pauline*, "faithful found" (from Milton), in *Paracelsus* "Reaping my sowing" (from Galatians), "Here I stand" (from Luther), and "poor melodious wretch" (from *Hamlet*). It is both sobering and frustrating to learn from Professor Jack's introduction that he had written to Pettigrew with a view to collaboration, but too late.

Turning to happier news, we can welcome these volumes as by far the most exhaustive, even the most luxurious, scholarly presentation of Browning's early work. The text, established with full apparatus by Margaret Smith, includes parallel texts of the 1833 and 1888 versions of *Pauline* and of the MS and 1888 versions of *Paracelsus*, and is set in beautifully clear type. Ian Jack brings to it the most formidable array of supporting material, prefacing each work with a substantial essay on its genesis and circumstances of composition. The footnotes include liberal quotation from early annotations by J. S. Mill on *Pauline*, Alfred Domett on *Paracelsus*, Emily Hickey on *Strafford*, and from the Syracuse University copy of *Sordello*. Generous dynastic and biographical information on Eccelin the Stutterer and countless other historical figures is provided, often from Browning's own presumed sources, with indications of his frequent departures from history. We even have pointed out for us a passage of *Paracelsus* specially cherished by Gordon of Khartoum, and a refutation of Browning's dubious ornithology when he implies that ospreys favour stormy weather (although only Pettigrew picks up Browning's error in having a gannet nest in a birch tree in *Paracelsus*). It is little treasures like these which save an annotated edition from being merely awesome.

Jack has decided that he would rather be guilty of glossing too much than too little, and when dealing with a vocabulary as luxuriant as Browning's, this is surely the right policy, even if it is not followed fully. The reader who is unfamiliar with Italy and Switzerland gets little help with the place-names in *Sordello* and *Paracelsus*, and there are moments towards the end of *Sordello* where (not surprisingly) the editor's concentration seems to tire: "appanage", "causey", "stibadium" and "Perdue" slip by unglossed in Book V, as do "plackets" and "mulet" in Book VI, whereas earlier Jack even glosses "glosses" ("*curious glosses*: ingenious commentaries"). His raids on the *OED* in search of Browning's plentiful coinages and nonce-words are necessarily frequent, and often fascinating. "Loathy", which found its way into the dictionary, turns out to be only a misprint for "loathly", while we can now be reasonably sure that Browning was the first English poet to use the word "tumescent", forty years and more before the *OED*'s earliest example.

The most daunting challenge for the editor as for the reader is of course the notoriously obscure *Sordello*; it is here that the reader is most likely to look either down to the footnotes or up to the heavens for assistance. To attack this monster, Jack surrounds it with a powerful battery of interpretative weapons, including a lengthy summary of the poem's action (and lack of it), a full translation of Daunou's *Biographie Universelle* article on Sordello, and the placing of Browning's 1863 "headlines" to the poem in the margins. His glossing in the footnotes often runs together to paraphrase extended passages of the poem, and at certain points turns into a running translation. These lines, for instance, come from a passage which in 1840 the *Athenaeum* cited in its review as a sample of *Sordello*'s obscurity:

> What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
> Bubes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
> The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
> A hungry sun above us, sands that hung
> Our throats – each dromedary lolls a tongue,
> Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
> And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap
> And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
> – Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
> With founts about!

"The sense", explains Jack, after citing Numbers 20, "is that we (the human race) are in a situation as desperate as that of the children of Israel, in the desert of Zin, yet you complacent fools produce reassuring madrigals, stories on the theme of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39) or sonnets about Balaam's ass (Numbers 22), and express your wonder that anyone should require any more refreshing 'water of life'." There remain many occasions for bafflement in the poem, but Jack's commentary has forced them back to controllable pockets of resistance.

The Browning who emerges from the materials assembled in these volumes is a poet completely isolated from even a putative readership; so much so that he really imagined that *Sordello* was "of a more popular nature" than *Paracelsus*, "but not so decisive or explicit on a point or two". Similar delusions can be charted in the accounts, reprinted here from Macready's fascinating journal, of the doomed rewriting and staging of Browning's play *Strafford*, as the actor-manager realizes with horror that he has on his hands a playwright utterly blind to the demands and capacities of a real audience. Readers of a poet like this need all the help they can get; and Jack and Smith have provided it in abundance.

Communal consolidations

Marilyn Booth

KHALID A. SULAIMAN
Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry
200pp. Zed Books. £18.95 (paperback, £6.95).
0 862322 38 3

In the late 1950s, a group of Palestinian poets based in Nazareth formed a "League of Poets Writing in Arabic" and began to hold poetry festivals in surrounding towns and villages. There is a long history of declaimed poetry in Arabic, and these public readings drew large crowds: they became important arenas for the expression of a sense of national identity within the Palestinian community, and for the elucidation of particular issues which faced that community – the more so because press censorship by the Israeli authorities made printed publication difficult or impossible. The Israeli authorities often refused permission for poets to travel from their home towns to the festivals, while those employed as teachers in government schools were threatened with dismissal. But the popularity of the public poetry reading has not diminished: the packed hall which faced the Palestinian poets Samih al-Qasim and Mahmud Darwish as they read from their recent works in London last November was another indication of the importance that poetic expression has had in the Palestinian movement for national self-determination.

In his survey of how the historical experience of the Palestinians and the issue of Palestinian nationhood have informed twentieth-century Arabic poetry, Khalid Sulaiman affirms the possibilities of poetry as a vehicle of political expression, and as a means of consolidating community identity. Interweaving sketches of the historical development of Palestinian nationalism with discussion of the major themes which appeared in Arabic poetry on Palestine at each stage of the recent history of the region, he draws on a broad sample of poetry by both Palestinians and non-Palestinian Arabs.

While extensive discussion of the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine appeared in the local and regional Arabic-language press from the turn of the twentieth century, poetry in Arabic prior to the end of the First World War shows a greater preoccupation with Arab–Ottoman Turkish relations. Following the publication of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the situation in Palestine began to receive more attention from local poets, but it was not until the late 1920s – and particularly following clashes which erupted in 1929 over access to the Buraq or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, a site sacred to both Muslims and Jews – that Palestinian themes also began to appear frequently in poetry by non-Palestinian Arab poets. A predominant theme was that of Palestine's religious significance to Muslims. After the declaration of Israeli statehood in 1948 Arabic poetry about Palestine became infused with a tone of bitterness and despair – though qualified by hope. Not only were new subjects available (for instance, the stateless Palestinian, moving from debilitating shock to active resistance) and old ones transformed (for example, criticism of the Palestinian and non-Palestinian Arab leadership for its division and inaction gave way to more sweeping examinations of the structures of society in a search for the causes of defeat); new elements of poetic expression appeared, in tandem with the rise of the free-verse movement among poets writing in Arabic and the growing use of symbols and myths in poetic composition. Palestine becomes the beloved whom the wandering lover cannot reach; Jesus, Sindbad, Ulysses and Husayn represent the Palestinian, as resurrection, restlessness, exile and suffering become dominant themes in the poetry of the 1960s and 1970s; figures from Hebrew history and myth (Samson, Tamar, Lazarus) are also appropriated in order to express aspects of the Palestinians' experience.

Dr Sulaiman's study exhibits both the potential and the dangers of wide-ranging surveys. He is able to present variation, both synchronic and diachronic, in the treatment of theme: for example, from the period immediately after the First World War to the 1930s, the image of Great Britain moves from that of the reliable liberator (from the Ottoman Turks) to that of the oppressor working through an invading alien population. In the decade following 1917, positions discernible in the poetry of Palestinian poets concerning the Balfour Declaration range from dismissal (linked to trust in the British government) to an attribution of the entire Zionist programme to the encouragement offered it by the Declaration. Sulaiman also makes some useful observations on the different emphases found in the works of Palestinian and non-Palestinian Arab poets (and, in the post-1948 period, between the perspectives of Palestinian poets living inside the 1948 borders of Israel, those in the territories occupied in 1967, and those in exile).

However, his attempt to incorporate the works of as many poets as possible writing in Arabic on the subject of Palestine over three-quarters of a century and to examine both the ways in which the subject has been taken up thematically and how it has permeated modern Arabic poetry on every level leads at times to abruptness, confusion and superficiality. His comparisons of developments in poetry with those in modern Arabic prose fiction and drama are not finely enough drawn to be useful. Finally, disappointment results at times from his failure to develop some of his more intriguing observations – which are clearly based on perusal of an immense amount of material. This is particularly so in his discussion of poetry composed between 1967 and 1973, and especially as he turns to examination of the ways in which the penetration of Arabic cultural activity by the Palestine question has affected tools of literary expression. The extremely abbreviated treatments of the use of themes and structures drawn from the folk culture of Palestine, and equally of the development of poetic diction, suggest again that the author has ample material and ideas for a lengthy study of each topic. But as they stand they are frustratingly incomplete.

Sulaiman illustrates his points copiously with excerpts drawn from the works of many poets, given both in the original Arabic and in English translation. The translations themselves are generally fluid but sometimes awkward; a more serious flaw is the sacrifice on occasion of the specificity and sharpness of an image or a usage to the goal of clarity and simplicity in English. The reader's attention may be jolted by careless reproduction and inconsistent treatment of line organization; if there is a reason for the latter, it is not given. The unmarked deletion of single lines or whole sections of quoted excerpts is a regrettable oversight. In spite of its shortcomings, however, *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry* is a useful introduction to the subject, given the dearth of studies available to an English-speaking audience. The author's approach and range have obviated any easy classification of the intersection of political events, personal experience and poetic expression, while demonstrating the commitment of modern Arab poets to the issue of Palestinian nationhood – and to the vitality of poetry as a public voice.

Consonances of confusion

John A. C. Greppin

VAHÉ OSHAGAN
Khujab
$50. Unnumbered pp.
Available from 2419 Lake St., San Francisco 94121.

Vahé Oshagan is among the most important poets writing in Armenian today. His language, the Western Armenian dialect, was formerly spoken throughout Ottoman Turkey and is used today in Beirut, Mosul, Cairo, Aleppo and other increasingly charmless cities that symbolize the advancing culture of the Middle East. It is these cities, with their ugliness, brutality and menace, yet with a seductive appeal, that generate Oshagan's poetry.

Khujab (Panic) is Oshagan's fifth book. The first three appeared in Beirut between 1957 and 1971, and the fourth in Philadelphia in 1980. Oshagan's poetry is patriotic (one might think all Armenian writers were touched with a lambent patriotism) and concerned not only with the poet's identity, but with the identity of the Armenian people. In an earlier book (1963) he expressed this metaphorically:

> while the ancient trembling daguerreotype
> photographer stands by his tripod
> in the alley of the embassy,
> washing, washing the negative for years
> waiting for the client to return
> to recognize himself.

In his current work his self-image is still wholly urban, but less elegantly described; he questions less and he has less hope. The Armenian quarters of his cities are the scene of violence and death:

> [he] lives in the cast-iron war memorial
> on the outskirts of this slum . . . and beside him
> allegorical puppets arrive in droves to be mutilated.

The tatters of life are everywhere:

> A torn rag flaps on the dusty balcony where
> a gross Armenian hag (who too yearns for light) curses
> softly in Turkish.
> (my translation)

The principal failing of Oshagan's poetry is that it needs ruthless editing. Virtually no publisher, whether in Beirut or Aleppo, or in the new Armenian neighbourhoods of Los Angeles or Fresno, will publish Armenian poetry in the hope of profit. Publication depends on one of three possibilities: the interest of a wealthy benefactor; a contest staged by an Armenian organization, the prize being publication; or the author paying for publication himself. This last method is the way most Western Armenian poetry comes to light. This inevitably leads to self-indulgence, even in the case of a man of Oshagan's self-discipline.

Armenian poetry is not entirely unavailable in successful English translation. In 1978 Columbia University Press published an *Anthology of Armenian Poetry*, translated and edited by Diana Der Hovanessian and Marzbed Margossian, from which the example of Oshagan's 1963 poetry given above was taken. That edition starts with the poetry of the fifth century but graduates quickly to the more recent material of the Armenian Romantic period, which some living Armenian poets have not left. In that volume Oshagan stands well ahead of most of his fellow contemporary Armenian poets. He has a voice that is clearly different, sometimes even scandalous (one Armenian printer in Beirut has refused ever to print his material again) and certainly one that would not be heard within the Soviet Union, in the poetry of the Eastern Armenian dialect. There the poet does not engage in the rebellion that Oshagan so cherishes, for Oshagan finds little peace, little joy, little contentment. Instead he continues to attack "the dense consonance of human confusion / that lies anchored in opaque bodies". Oshagan sees himself and his kindred Western Armenian poets trapped in an urban world unrelated to their culture and desires. He cannot yearn for his ancestral Anatolia, for he does not know it; nor can he favour the American or French home of some Armenians, for that is the furthest limit of the Armenian diaspora. Instead he is squeezed against "a world nine months pregnant / and discharging more mass".

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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

Nobody really believes this story, and I'm not always certain of being able to vouch for it myself, but sometime in 1979 I answered my telephone and heard someone say, "This is Thomas Pynchon speaking." Pynchon is, and was, as famous as Salinger for avoiding all contact with anybody who might write about him. I thought it might be a hoax until he said that he had been given my name by Ian McEwan, who confirmed as much.

Pynchon was telephoning, and thus breaking with the habit of a lifetime, in outrage. He complained that the British customs authorities had seized copies of a novel by Larry Kramer called *Faggots*. First, he wanted to know, was this legal or believable? I replied rather feebly that he obviously didn't know British officialdom very well. Second, then, he wondered about a public outcry. What chance? Didn't people know Larry Kramer's stuff? I suggested unguardedly that we meet to discuss a petition, adding that Kramer wasn't widely enough read to make outrage automatic. He declined the meeting and soon afterwards replaced the receiver, making me think that it must have been him after all.

Well, in New York City at least, everybody now knows who Larry Kramer is. He already had a distinct reputation because of *Faggots*, and he had won, or been nominated for, some kind of Academy nomination for his adaptation of *Women in Love*. But his newest play, *The Normal Heart*, has pierced to the core of the city's homosexual community – and well beyond – by its treatment of the AIDS crisis. Susan Sontag, in *Illness as Metaphor*, took some pains to argue that plague did not fall from heaven as a revenge on the unclean. *La Peste* presents epidemic neither as deserved nor quite undeserved. Ibsen, in one of the most telling "shoot the messenger" dramas, illustrated the great suasion that is exerted by denial. Even by raising the question – "Do we bring these things on ourselves?" – Kramer has opened a debate that many of the victims and their friends do not regard as timely, appropriate, or even decent.

In *Faggots*, a man named Fred Limish goes looking for love in all the wrong places. More graphic than James Baldwin or Hubert Selby, and writing as always from an affirmatively homosexual point of view, Kramer in this novel also conveyed a sense of premonitory unease, even foreboding, about the spread of promiscuity, sado-masochism and narcotics among the homosexual population. It may not be too fanciful, then, to see *The Normal Heart* as a stage vindication of the concern prefigured in the novel. To say that relentless partner-trading is loveless and narcissistic is one thing, and a moral judgment. But to say that it is dangerous – *deadly* dangerous – is a verdict of another kind. It disrupts the facile distinction between the sin and the sinner or, in order to be less facile myself, the act and the actor. By insisting on the connection between the sensual and the carnal, and by gravely insisting on the idea of causality, even responsibility, Kramer has exposed himself to the accusation of blaming the victim; thereby, of course, betraying his own sexuality and his own friends and loyalties.

The Federal Government calculates that half of all the gay men in New York are carriers of the AIDS virus. Nobody really denies any longer that the "brief encounter" culture had something to do with this. What Kramer has done is to try and compel his audience to consider the ghastly idea of their complicity: so that various characters in the play, including one who is clearly the authorial voice, are saying things about anonymous sex being "junk food", about "guys who can't relate to each other except as erections", about the cult of the mindlessly muscular, and other pitiless things. Kramer himself in an interview says that

> This is a community that is for the most part obsessed with physical appearance, with youth and with beauty. I am not attractive in gay terms. I am not blond, I am not young and I have achieved professionally, which many gay men find threatening.

Not, in Kramer's or anybody else's milieu, an immediately friend-winning remark. Joseph Papp, director of New York's Public Theater, agreed to put on the play after no less than eight agents had turned it down. "Once in every ten years or so", he says, "a play comes along that fulfils my original idea of what role theatre must play in society." The most improbable critics seem to agree. John Simon, of *New York* magazine, who has been accused in the past of homophobia, admitted that he wept during the performance and called *The Normal Heart* "a river of indignation and anger, fear and love". Praise from this quarter was taken, by the more defiant homosexual critics, as evidence that Larry Kramer had indeed "sold out".

Inescapably, comparisons with *An Enemy of the People* are being made. Kramer can hardly not be flattered by the analogy, which both enhances his standing as a playwright and promotes his chief character, the writer Ned Weeks, to the coveted position of brave, lonely, derided warning voice. Stuff and nonsense, says Richard Goldstein in the *Village Voice*. In a table-turning polemic, he claims that Kramer is the narcissist and asks "Why are so many gay men promiscuous?" before saying audiaciously that "the question can only be answered by heterosexuals". Evident in this and other dissents and protests is the agonized, infuriated sense of the bloody *unfairness* of it all. Centuries of discrimination, ridicule and deception (while fetid poxes were everywhere spread by heterosexuals) followed by a decade of emerging unapologetic candour and perhaps a decade more, in New York at least, of blissful freedom and acceptance. Now, just as homosexuality was beginning to be looked upon as "normal", *this* has to happen. Nothing could be more crushing or embittering.

Kramer seems to say, coolly and forensically, that the emergency is not his idea, that infection and plague must be faced in the open, and that prophylaxis might even begin at home. Injustice, though, can be felt just as keenly as danger, and natural injustice, because there is no appeal against it, even more so. In other words, it is hard for one to be rid of the idea that some people are obscurely glad this has happened. The argument, then, is not really between Kramer and his critics but between his critics and those whom they believe he has inflamed. AIDS may not be a retribution, but it has robbed Kramer's novel of the irony contained in its title. Homosexuals are once more fair game, taboo; subject to disgusting and terrifying exposure. "Faggots", in fact.

> What mad Nijinsky wrote
> About Diaghilev
> Is true of the normal heart;
> For the error bred in the bone
> Of each woman and each man
> Craves what it cannot have,
> Not universal love
> But to be loved alone.

* * *

To stay with the coronary metaphor for a moment, and without wishing to be flippant, I have a question. There has been a republication of Opal Whiteley's *Journal of an Understanding Heart*. Originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Ellery Sedgwick in 1920, the book is a diary of a precocious little girl who may or may not have been the unrecognized daughter of Henri, duc d'Orleans, and who in any event fetched up in the Oregon lumber camps in the early part of the century. The entries record some affecting memories of an "Angel mother" and an "Angel father". There is also a good deal of stuff about Felix Mendelssohn, a cherished mouse; Lars Porsena, a knowing crow; Peter Paul Rubens, a devoted pig who followed the girl to school, and Michael Raphael, a tree into which she would scramble for solace and comfort. Perhaps forgetting himself for a moment, Ellery Sedgwick described young Miss Whiteley as "something very young and eager and fluttering, like a bird in a thicket".

Can it be that this *gamine* is at least part of the original for Madeline Bassett, who thought that the stars were God's daisy chain and who went to kiss the flowers and rabbits good morning and good night in case they burst into tears? The dates, as far as I can scan them, fit. Is there anyone who can advise me on this stab at the possible provenance of Bertie's Nemesis?

* * *

The publishing event of the spring was beyond doubt the release, by Alfred A. Knopf and Company, of *Breaking with Moscow* by Arkady N. Shevchenko. As the highest-ranking Soviet diplomat to defect since the Second World War (he had been Under-Secretary General at the United Nations) Shevchenko was interesting enough in his own right. But he also claimed to have been working, for several years before his defection, as an "in place" mole for the CIA. Sensation. Shevchenko received all the accolades of the hype industry – the cover of *Time*, a slot on *Sixty Minutes*, a gigantic publishers' advance, a half-million-dollar movie contract and a snug place on the *New York Times* best-seller list.

The reverse of hype in the United States is the *schadenfreude* which attends events like the exposure of Miss America as a porn poseuse, the unmasking of an Oscar-winner as a cocaine freak, or the revelation that some venerable morals campaigner is a hardened leather-artist. Arkady Shevchenko, who had only just begun to savour the sweets of an American success, is now finding out what it feels like to fall like Lucifer. In a very thorough and damning article in the *New Republic*, Edward Jay Epstein has shown that *Breaking with Moscow* is for all effective purposes, a work of fiction. The assignations described could not have taken place, the times and dates do not fit – anachronism is Mr Shevchenko's preferred method of giving himself away – and the revelations of intrigue and espionage are worthless. In an attempt to tackle their critic rather than his criticisms, Shevchenko's publishers say disdainfully that Mr Epstein is a well-known "conspiracy theorist". This is a poor attempt at changing the subject, and anyway Mr Epstein is no such thing. He does have a sound reputation, though, as an investigator of frauds and conspiracies, which is something else again.

The interest of the controversy, which is becoming less of a controversy as more evidence emerges to support Mr Epstein, is this. He was able to show that the book was phoney by a long and rigorous process of checking and correlation. But the publishers could have known from the first that there was something odd about the manuscript.

When Shevchenko submitted his original manuscript to Simon and Schuster, it was distinctly low on exclusive revelations, skulduggery and glimpses of the Politburo. But he gave a legal undertaking to the effect that he had no more to say and no undisclosed or unused materials. The suspicion must be that, having been turned down by previous houses because his tale contained nothing substantially new, Shevchenko decided to "improve" his material. Whether he was assisted in this by his new patrons in Langley, Virginia, must be a point of conjecture, but not much of one. And the damaging corollary of that suspicion is, as Epstein puts it, that

> this book dangerously distorts the entire substance of Soviet–American relations by misrepresenting that the United States had secret advantages it never had. The authoritative falsification of a sub-rosa world is especially damaging since the fictive elements cannot easily be tested or verified by ordinary means.

In the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the Central Intelligence Agency put a great deal of effort into disseminating books under "straight" titles and with "on the level" publishers. The exposure of the practice led to ridicule, and to the fear among legitimate authors that the whole profession would be compromised. A version of this view was until recently the prevailing one. If the Agency was thinking of recovering lost ground, it picked a real turkey with Shevchenko.

* * *

In "American notes" on May 10 I wrote about the reception of Robert Ward's novel *Red Baker* and asked if, perhaps, taste and fashion weren't turning against the "yuppies". Confirmation came sooner than I had dared to hope. In the Metropolitan section of the *New York Times*, which is to say in the very paper whose numerous supplements did so much to promote the original trend, there has now appeared a definitively tide-turning article. Describing the chaotic conditions on the Upper West Side, the writer uncovers every symptom of shame and withdrawal. As one corporate PR executive said to her, "I feel like everything I do is a trend. I can't buy imported cheese in good conscience any more, or state-of-the-art booties. I can't even buy a feisty little Beaujolais." The only untypical thing about this statement is that "booties" imply children – the most deplored and avoided outcome of the two-income, upwardly mobile combo.

As the term itself has become pejorative or derisive, advertising firms are de-emphasizing the "yuppie" motif. Makers of "designer" goods are backing away from the image of welf-indulgence. Every sign of morbidity is apparent. This must have been the shortest-lived "life-style" era on the hectic Manhattan index.

"Simon's Kitchen"
23.2.85

The week you were doing the sink
and window-sill, we washed up
in the bath. Nothing could be moved.
Each jar, jug, plate, cup
had its marked place. Who'd think
objects could be that much loved?

I was not allowed to see.
I was not allowed to be in the room
while it was going on. I'd no
idea, the detail, the steady bloom
of colour turned face down at tea.
And when, eventually, you did show,

it was through that sink window,
with me standing out on the lawn
at a distance. I wanted to get close
immediately, drawn
to the transformed familiar row
of books by the fire, the loose

fall of my jacket over a chair
(not worn in weeks): all recognizably mine
– and yet, all yours, yours. I feel the same
today, inspecting each fine
feature: corn-on-the-cob toes, whorl of an ear –
your latest picture crying for a name.

SIMON RAE

Letters

Development Economics

Sir, – Walter Elkan (Letters, June 21) has not responded to the basic point I was making in my reaction to his review of *Pioneers of Development* (May 17). This was that he has joined the mad rush of development economists to the view that the free market, left to its own devices, will be the best mechanism for achieving development in poor and middle-income countries. In this view, there is no role for state planning and it is claimed that agriculture is not called upon to finance industrialization. This last will, Professor Elkan claims, come about as a result of the operation of comparative advantage: a far more complex and controversial concept than he would lead us to believe.

The opposition which Elkan claims to observe between "efficient industries developed on the basis of comparative advantage" and "inefficient import-substituting industrialization" is misleading. The countries of South-East Asia which he mentions have built up export-led industries on a previously established import-substituting process and continue to exhibit tight government controls over their economies. ("Import-substitution", by the way, means import controls in UK jargon.) There is, furthermore, abundant evidence that Japanese agriculture financed that country's industrialization over a period of some 100 years, thus countering his suggestion that such transfers hinder the development process.

There is no doubt that African governments have imposed severely prejudicial prices on their farmers, and this may well have contributed to the current state of agriculture in many African countries. But this was done less in the name of industrialization than in order to enrich – licitly and illicitly – the emerging élites of post-colonial Africa. To use this argument as evidence against the substitution of imports *in general*, and against the financing of industry by agriculture *in general*, is misleading.

My "intemperate" reaction to Elkan's review was provoked by the one-sidedness of his views. To readers who know little of the subject his review gave the impression that there really is a "pure" export-promoting path to industrialization, based on comparative advantage which does raise living standards and does not squeeze agriculture; and that there is also a "pure" protectionist import-substituting industrialization path which does not. The analytical and empirical bases for such an opposition simply do not exist.

DAVID LEHMANN.
Centre of Latin-American Studies, University of Cambridge, History Faculty Building, West Road, Cambridge.

London Bookshops

Sir, – I heartily concur with Graham Nowland's strictures upon publishers (Letters, July 5). It is appallingly arrogant of a publisher to impute "gross exaggeration" to booksellers. If publishers are that concerned to polish their image in the eyes of the public then they must buck up. The truth is that British publishing is riddled with inefficiencies and idleness, and the bookseller bears the brunt of all this. As a bookseller myself, I get weary of making the same excuses, the same explanations to the public, and all because the publisher won't deliver, or delivers the wrong book, or the wrong edition, or the wrong quantity – or nothing at all!

As Mr Nowland points out, books are regarded as "different". That is the merest excuse for insisting that the normal standards of trading need not apply. May I suggest that what the book trade needs to shake it out of its slumbers is the scrapping of the Net Book Agreement? Such scrapping would make the market aggressive, and publishers would soon find that they would need to improve their services or go out of business.

The arguments for this absurd Agreement usually run along the lines that Mr Nowland himself suggests as to the expectations that a "civilized society" has regarding booksellers: special social role, stocking of commercially unviable items, uneconomic services. To have to endure the fixing of prices on top of all this is intolerable: but may I point out that if prices were determined by the bookseller, guided by his own market, and subject to his own marketing skills, all these so-called "special" functions would become more, not less, economically viable.

I may point out, before anybody else does, that "of course" I would suggest these things: my bookshop specializes in classical liberal and free-market literature. My rejoinder is that we so specialize because these ideas make for greater efficiency and effectiveness – if acted upon!

MARK ROGERS.
The Alternative Bookshop, 3 Langley Court, Covent Garden, London WC2.

'Now to My Mother'

Sir, – On June 14, you published a long and fair review by Anne Chisholm of Susan Chitty's book about our mother, Antonia White.

Since there was no way that reviewers could have known about mistakes of fact, or misquotations, from Antonia White's as yet unpublished diaries, in *Now to My Mother*, it is not surprising, though unfortunate, that the extracts used by reviewers often reproduced these inaccuracies. So, in case any admirers of Antonia White should have been saddened by the portrait of her in this book, and since she is no longer alive to defend herself, may I point out the errors in the two quotations used by Anne Chisholm in her review?

"'Lyndall and I hated our mother . . .'". As I explained in a talk to the PEN Club in 1982, I did not hate my mother, though I certainly feared her. I hope this will become clear when my book about Antonia White is published next year.

"'She [Susan] has caused unnecessary trouble all her life. She has been a hole in my bag.'" Between these two sentences came a long explanation of why she felt her eldest daughter had caused *unnecessary* (Antonia White's italics, not mine) trouble. It would be over a page later that she would write: "My attitude to money is too tense & nervous at the moment & with Sue here it was like a hole in one's bag."

LYNDALL P. HOPKINSON.
Il Palazzone, Cortona (Arezzo), Italy.

'The Snow Queen'

Sir, – Brian Alderson (July 5) prefers L. W. Kingsland's translation of Hans Andersen's Danish "saa klog er hun" ("she's so clever") to Eric Haugaard's ("and that is the part that proves how intelligent she is").

Others don't. Apart from the fact that *klog* does not mean "clever" (nor, exactly, "intelligent") but "wise", ie, "sensible", Andersen's quiet laconicism is lost in Kingsland's rather heavy-handed irony. "Neater" it may well be; "more accurate" it ain't.

A. MALSTRÖM.
50A Goldhurst Terrace, London NW6.

George Balanchine

Sir, – "The greatest choreographer the classical ballet has ever known": so says Matthew Gurewitsch, reviewing two books on Balanchine (June 21). Really? Has he (I do not know his age) heard of Fokine and Massine?

Here is a selection of Fokine's ballets: *Daphnis et Chloé*, *Petrouchka*, *Fire Bird*, *Schéhérazade*, *Les Sylphides*, *Prince Igor Dances*, *Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la rose*, *Le Coq d'or*.

Here are some of Massine's: *Beau Danube*, *La Boutique fantasque*, *Les Femmes de bonne humeur*, *Galeté parisienne*, *Jeux d'enfants*, *Parade*, *Les Présages*, *Symphonie fantastique*, *Le Tricorne*.

Artists as great as Picasso, Bakst, Miro, Benois, Derain, Dufy, Gontcharova and Bérard were proud to work with them.

Balanchine was a fine choreographer. When Mr Gurewitsch can match the above list of ballets and artists and the music to which they were danced, he can start moving from "fine" to "great". I saw many of these ballets before the War – did Mr Gurewitsch?

What Balanchine needed was a Diaghilev, what he accepted was America, but it did not make him the world's greatest choreographer.

MORRIS COCKBURN.
1 Beechwood Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

'The Glass Menagerie'

Sir, – Could I please correct a small error made by T. O. Treadwell (Commentary, June 7) in his review of the Greenwich Theatre production of Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*?

Treadwell speaks of the present year as being the fortieth anniversary of the play's first appearance in the theatre. This is almost, but not quite, true. As Tennessee Williams states in his *Memoirs*, the play opened in Chicago in the late December of 1944 – before going on to Broadway in the following year.

PAUL FLETCHER.
104 Main Street, Dreghorn, Irvine, Ayrshire.

The first W. H. Auden Translation Prize, to a value of 40,000 Austrian schillings, has been awarded to Gitta Holroyd-Reece for her English translations of works by Thomas Bernhard, H. C. Artmann and Gerhard Fritsch.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS *of July 11, 1935, carried a review of* The Dog Beneath the Skin: Or, Where is Francis? A play in three acts *by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, from which these extracts are taken:*

Mr Auden's experiments in poetic drama have not led him, like Mr T. S. Eliot, to ecclesiastical precincts but in a contrary direction, to the very theatricality of the theatre, to pantomime. For him this is as it should be. The existing theatre is an entertainment, and if the poet can overlay therein some hints for the pleasure of the thoughtful, he dissolves the dilemma (which, strangely, average dramatic criticism seeks to intensify), the dilemma of choice between fun and serious interest. Shakespeare smiled at the dilemma, because he hardly knew it existed; but, were he a new writer to-day, he would be testily told that he must either be tragic or comic. Fortunately he has been for some time in his grave, and therefore may be looked to for an impressive precedent . . . .

In the main, emphasis falls on ridicule of present social situations, chiefly all forms of Nazi thought and the life in capitalist society. The ridicule is often riotous and unsubtle. Nazis are dealt with, for example, by means of a scene in a lunatic asylum. This may sound rather like an undergraduate rag (and indeed an adolescent ring echoes throughout), but it justifies itself by being effective, as one may judge, on the stage . . . .

Richness of language, a teeming range of subject-matter and types (if no characters), and eminent diversion – to bring these things together into the theatre at a narrow period is the merit to be chiefly applauded. To bemoan defects now would be captious – when later plays will no doubt remedy them.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 234

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 2. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 234" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 9.

1 "It was hot there too; big flies buzzed fiendishly, did not sting, but stabbed. I sat generally on the floor, while, of faultless appearance (and even slightly scented), perching on a high stool, he wrote. Sometimes he stood up for exercise."

2 I stood up and peeled off my coat and got a handkerchief out and mopped my face and neck and the backs of my wrists. St Louis in August had nothing on that place. I sat down again and felt automatically for a cigarette and then stopped.

3 "And is it *very* hot in the summer?" said H. "I suppose it is."

"Yes", he said, "it's very hot. I've known the days when I've had to lie down at two o'clock in the afternoon, and not been able to move. Overpowered, that's what it is, overpowered."

Competition No 230
Winner: Priscilla Bawcutt
Answers:

1 Kind, honest-hearted Willie,
I'm sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin, e'en as forjeskit and forniaw'd as a forfoughten cock, to gie you some notion o' my landlopperlike stravaguin sin the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' auld Reekie.
Robert Burns, letter to Willie Nicol, June 1787.

2 Auld Reekie's bigger, nou, what's mair,
and folk wha hae the greater share
of warldlie gear may tak the air
in Morningside,
and neadna sclim the turnpike stair
whar ye wad byde.
Robert Garioch, "To Robert Fergusson".

3 Daft gowk, in Macaroni dress,
Are ye come here to shew your face,
Bowden wi' pride o' simmer gloss,
To cast a dash at Reikie's cross;
And glowr at mony twa-legged creature,
Flees braw by art, tho' worms by nature?
Robert Fergusson, "On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street".

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Rudolf Arnheim's *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* will be published later this year.

Chris Baldick is the author of *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848–1931*, 1983.

T. J. Binyon's crime novel *Swan Song* appeared in 1982.

Marilyn Booth is Randall-McIver Junior Research Fellow at St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Stuart Cosgrove is Head of Drama at the West London Institute.

Vincent Crapanzano's study of white South Africans, *Waiting*, will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

Michael Crowder is Professor of History at the University of Botswana.

Michael Davie was the Editor of the *Melbourne Age* from 1979 to 1981.

Tim Dooley's first collection of poems, *The Interrupted Dream*, will be published later this month.

John Fairleigh is senior lecturer in Social Studies at the Queen's University, Belfast.

John Feather is senior lecturer in Literary and Information Studies at Loughborough University of Technology.

Roy Foster's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A political life* was published in 1981.

Francis Haskell is Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford. His books include *Patrons and Painters: A study of the relations between art and society in the age of the baroque*, which was reissued in 1980.

Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist for the *Nation*.

Jonathan Keates's collection of stories, *Allegro Postillions*, was published in 1983.

E. J. Kenney's books include *The Classical Text*, 1974.

Michael Meyer's biography of August Strindberg will be published later this summer.

Patrick Minford is the Edward Gonner Professor of Applied Economics at the University of Liverpool.

Richard Osborne's *Rossini*, in the Master Musicians series, will be published early next year.

David Parker's books include *The Making of French Absolutism*, 1983.

J. B. Paul is senior lecturer in Political Science at the University of New South Wales.

W. V. Quine's most recent book is *Theories and Things*, 1981.

Peter Reading's most recent collection of poems, *Ukelele Music*, was published last month.

Erich Segal's study of Plautus, *Roman Laughter*, 1968, will be reissued in a revised edition next year.

Arthur Seldon is Advisory Director of the Institute for Economic Affairs.

Ljubo Sirc is a senior lecturer in Political Economy at the University of Glasgow.

Robert Snell is the author of *Théophile Gautier: A romantic critic of the visual arts*, 1982.

Stephen Wall is a Fellow of Keble College, Oxford.

COMMENTARY

Statements of style

Jonathan Parry

Around 1610: The Onset of the Baroque
Matthiesen Fine Art, 7/8 Mason's Yard, Duke Street, London SW1, until August 16

Last year's exhibition of Ferrarese masters at Matthiesen Fine Art was memorable for having told us something about painting – not always what we expect in the increasingly market-sensitive world of commercial London galleries. The current display of early seventeenth-century painting repeats this feat, assembling canvases of such compelling distinction as to compare favourably with the Royal Academy's lavish Neapolitan and Spanish exhibitions in 1982 and 1976.

It also reminds us, as these did, how little we still grasp of the temper of the age itself. Faced with Antonio Caracci's "Martyrdom of St Praxedes", for instance, painted around 1613, our sense of the Italian Baroque as a mixture of Berninian rapture and Caravaggesque loucheness is embarrassed by the almost scholarly reserve and lucidity of statement with which the artist presents the saint, a figure whose Roman purity is as much that of the pagan republic as the Christian empire. The same is true of Gentileschi's "Madonna and Child with Saints Francis and Sebastian": Caravaggism here seems as much of a false hare as the Mannerism in which the painter was grounded, and the tone and composition of this work appeal to a more venerable orthodoxy.

A Caravaggian impact is deeply stamped on several of the most arresting of these works, yet nearly always there are intriguing stylistic dilutions. The fine "Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia" by Carlo Saraceni shows a softening of dramatic tension in its compressed harmonies and an extraordinary emotional synthesis, almost a complicity, between the martyr and her angel. Mathias Stomer's "Calling of Saint Matthew" echoes its illustrious original in San Luigi dei Francesi only in the seated figures at the table, who look as though they would be more at home in Utrecht than in Rome. Even Aubin Vouet's "David with the Head of Goliath", a truculent, beefy boy in a plumed cap, looks more like sporting with allusion (the heavily angled divisions of the background are essentially parodic) than immediate acknowledgement.

Painterliness here comes in forms as diverse as an exquisite small landscape by Pietro da Cortona, in which the relaxed brushwork of the gauzy trees and mountains implies rather than establishes their existence, or the smaller Wtewael "Battle between the Gods and the Titans", a Mannerist confection of steatopygous males in luminous blues and yellows. The exhibition is at its best, however, in portraiture: Guido Reni's Cardinal Borghese, heavy with worldly sophistication, contrasts with the airier, more detached figure of Cardinal Bentivoglio in a Domenichino whose focus is brilliantly defined by a swatch of lace clutched in the sitter's hand. Elsewhere the entire shift of mood in early seventeenth-century Europe seems contained between the warm immediacy of Passerotti's black-bonneted unknown and the bleary-eyed, draggle-tail Quixote who sat to Tanzio da Varallo.

If, however, we are in search of a dominant image, it is surely that of handsome, double-chinned Olimpia Luna, painted, with all the wit at his command, by Agostino Caracci. But each portrait, and the whole of this magnificent exhibition, demands a closer look at an age whose painters were themselves so alert to the intelligent scrutiny of other men's paintings.

A detail from Jacopo Ligozzi's "Allegory of Avarice: Sapphira", which is currently on show in the exhibition, Around 1610: The Onset of the Baroque, *reviewed here.*

Counter-intelligent

T. J. Binyon

The Little Drummer Girl
Various cinemas

Half-way through this film a commander of the Metropolitan Police appears momentarily, lost in rueful and reluctant admiration of the direct, uncompromising methods of Israeli counter-intelligence. The policeman is played by someone called David Cornwell; David Cornwell is John le Carré's real name, and the expression on the character's face could well express the author's view of the way in which the screenwriter, Loring Mandel, and the director, George Roy Hill, have dealt with his long and rambling novel. Rococo narrative flourishes have been drastically cut, redundant characters mercilessly purged. The result is a leaner, tougher story-line, admirably directed in a variety of locations: West Germany, England, Greece and Israel – both as itself and as Lebanon – and exceedingly well played by actors who are, for the most part, unknown to English or American cinema audiences. This is not true, of course, of Klaus Kinski, who, as Kurtz, leader of the Israeli team, is never less than brilliant. He even manages to make some of the novel's – most, thank goodness, have been cut – continual and irritatingly artificial comparisons between drama and life, "the theatre of the real", sound plausible. However, Diane Keaton's performance, the centre of the film, is a disappointment.

The story of the film is reasonably simple. An actress, Charlie, is seduced by Israeli counter-intelligence and infiltrated into a group of Palestinian terrorists led by the dangerously attractive Khalil (Sami Frey). In the novel Charlie is a recognizable English type: a slutish, pot-smoking, free-loving, left-wing extremist, something of a hanraan, who is into every radical movement that ever circulated a pamphlet. In the film she is, perforce, an American, but not the American equivalent, Diane Keaton plays her, rather, as a twittering repressed thirty-five-year-old virgin, whose interruption at a political meeting is laughable, and whose attempt at a sexual come-on – directed at Joseph (Yorgo Voyagis), the Israeli hero – is simply embarrassing. Though the personality might not be le Carré's creation, it is a perfectly credible one. The difficulty is that it doesn't sort well with Charlie's subsequent persona: a Palestinian terrorist who can assemble, blindfold, an AK-47 in under ten seconds in perhaps the only farcical scene in the film. And, in its turn, this is hard to reconcile with her final metamorphosis into a state of hysteria followed by catalepsy after being showered with the blood of her terrorist lover by another man she is in love with.

The book makes a very conscious attempt to preserve a balance between Palestinian and Israeli; the film echoes this verbally, but the cruder nature of the medium, with its simpler morality of white hats versus black hats, leaves us in no doubt as to where our loyalties lie, and makes us less than sympathetic to Charlie's nervous breakdown. In its final chapter the book comes a sentimental cropper when trying to resolve the conflict between personal morality and political necessity. The film takes the same fence better, but still stumbles on landing: perhaps one has to realize, as Pushkin does in *The Bronze Horseman*, that the only dramatic solution for small people caught up in large events is a tragic one.

Recent publications in Methuen's Theatrescripts series include *Today* by Robert Holman (£2.25, 0 413 59490 4), *Moving Pictures* (*Glasshouses*, *Seachange*, *Stars* and *Strive*) by Stephen Lowe (£3.95, 0 413 58780 0) and *Human Cannon* by Edward Bond (£2.25, 0 413 57250 1). Michael Meyer's translations of *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (£2.50 each, 0 413 54460 5 and 0 413 54470 2) and Joe Orton's *Loot* (£2.50, 0 413 56760 5) are now available as student editions with commentary and notes. Faber have recently published Graham Reid's play about Northern Ireland, *Remembrance* (£3.95, 0 571 13549 8) and David Hare's *The History Plays* (*Knuckle*, *Licking Hitler*, and *Plenty*), (£3.50, 0 571 13132 8). Penguin Plays have reprinted Georges Feydeau's *Three Boulevard Farces* (*A Little Hotel on the Side*, *A Flea in Her Ear* and *The Lady From Maxim's*) translated by John Mortimer (£5.95, 0 14 048191 5).

Ending up odd

Peter Kemp

JOHN OSBORNE
A Better Class of Person
Thames TV

His play, *A Better Class of Person* is – John Osborne breaks into its opening scene to announce – "an attempt to salvage something from the derelict past". "A time comes when the slime can be safely scraped away", he explains, rather oddly in view of the fact that, though what is offered here is less rancid than the retrospect to be found in his autobiography under the same title, its recollections still gleam with bile. Against a war-time background, Osborne re-creates the bitter domestic battles that raged throughout his childhood. As his venerated father, a bookish consumptive, patiently wastes away, his execrated mother ferociously spits out resentment and rancour. Even bereavement fails to muffle her malevolence: "This room'll 'ave to be fumigated", she moans as her husband's corpse is laid out.

In Osborne's book about his early years, his mother features as a kind of Gothic figment – "The Black Look" that, on occasions of disaster for others, "flaked its powdery surface and broke into a yellow grin". In the play, Eileen Atkins's horror-comic performance, all pinched mouth and nipped waist, does justice to the whingeing truculence of this lipsticked misery: even reading a newspaper – pages turned in a flurry of crackling disturbance – becomes an act of aggression. But she adds depth and conviction, allowing fleeting glimpses of something wanly human behind the over-made-up mask of spite.

This slight mellowing is typical of the dramatization as a whole. Concentrating on a narrower span than Osborne's autobiography, it weeds out its prickliest features – such as the rank snobbery and rambling abuse. Most of the remarkably wide range of *bêtes noires* lashed out at upon the page are, on the screen, given a miss. So are many of the memoir's more rebarbative personnel. The grisly family get-togethers that supply the book's most acrid comedy are here tamer and less crowded – rather regrettably, as it would have been interesting to see what performers might have made of such discarded figures as "whey-faced wormy" Uncle Jack or Cousin Jill who resembled "a slightly indecent ice-cream salesgirl".

Similarly, there's a curtailing of the line-up of frightful females Osborne musters for virulent inspection in his book, starting with Daphne, the large schoolgirl who liked to fell him in the playground, hoist her skirt, and place "her navy blue gusset" firmly on his head. Some viragos still close in: a termagant landlady bristling with surliness and curlers, a hefty sadistic nurse who nearly drives him to breakdown in a convalescent home. But, with no outlet for diatribe about their outrages, much of Osborne's characteristic temper is lost.

Where the play is at its best is in its evocation of war-time Britain. Crowds scurry, under umbrellas, to air-raid shelters as sirens wail through the drizzle; at the empty seaside – bunting flapping horizontally in a stiff breeze – grey waves plash up barbed-wired beaches or around the sandbagged pier. Seeping into it all, too, comes the sound of the period. The play opens with Robb Wilton's monologue, "The Day War Broke Out", and ends with Vera Lynn. In between, wireless sets and cinema screens chirpily emit bad jokes from *ITMA*, Movietone mornle-boosters, tinny ditties, and George Formby's ukelele smut.

Soaking it all in is the young Osborne – unfalteringly played as a lost-looking boy in Burberry and balaclava by Gary Capelin, and rather more awkwardly as a toffee-nosed, plummy-voiced adolescent by Neil McPherson. References to his future are frequently voiced. Fools and fogies – to the almost audible sound of back-stage chortlings of authorial glee – forecast dim prospects for him. "That boy's got something wrong with him", rasps a glowering crone, lapping tea from her saucer. "He'll end up funny, you'll see." In an ill-advised bid to refute this in person, the older Osborne puts in a concluding appearance. Drawing attention to his success with *Look Back in Anger*, he witheringly reads an unfavourable review of it, screws this up, then flings it out to sea with the cry, "Bugger Bogarnor", and a burst of not entirely controlled-sounding laughter. It is a moment when his relation to the fuming, grudge-laden grouser his play pillories becomes peculiarly clear.

One line was omitted from the foot of each column in Peter Kemp's review on page 750 of last week's issue. The text should have read "later developing an enthusiasm for Expressionism, 'surrealistic authors' and 'the German Romantic tradition'" and "the differences between them – 'You taught boys: I dressed their mothers' – but also the gulf between their bleakish lives and glamorous hankerings".

COMMENTARY

The sounds of an idyll

Richard Osborne

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
La donna del lago
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

As the first fully fledged opera to be taken from the works of Sir Walter Scott, Rossini's *La donna del lago* touched the imagination of the contemporary opera-going public in a special way. The poet Leopardi thought it "a stupendous thing" and the composer Halévy vowed to read through its long first act once more before he died. Yet of all Rossini's later Neapolitan works, *La donna del lago* is the most fragile: less robust than *Ermione* or *Maometto II* and less well suited to performance in large houses. The opera's unsuccessful Parisian première in the Opéra's newest and biggest theatre, the Salle Le Peletier, alerted Rossini to the problem and accounts in part for his refusal to allow *Il viaggio a Reims* to undergo a similar fate the following year, 1825. There can be little doubt that *La donna del lago* is as well suited to houses like Glyndebourne and the Teatro Rossini in Pesaro as it is ill suited to houses like Covent Garden and La Scala, Milan.

Rossini's choice and treatment of the Scott is both characteristic and revealing of the methods of a composer who was more closely involved in the selection and shaping of his texts than the biographies would have us believe. Though the opera strips away some of the Gothic elements in Scott's poem, it remains faithful in many essentials to the letter and spirit of the original. As Rossini realizes it, Scott's *Lady of the Lake* becomes a pre-lapsarian idyll, ruffled here and there by intrusive Celtic bellicosity but, in essence, a tender and decorous drama which resolves effortlessly (all too effortlessly as Rossini later believed) into the blithe songfulness of Elena's showpiece finale, "Tanti affetti". In this respect, *La donna del lago* is one of this already ambiguous composer's most ambiguous works, distantly foreshadowing elements in *Guillaume Tell* but rather more obviously glancing back to the feichingly naive world of *Tancredi*.

Its picturesque lakeside and mountain settings and Gothic ruins will always look well in a large house and they look well enough in this 1981 Houston production, designed in the early Turner manner by Ming Cho Lee. But how well the opera sounds is another matter. Those who booed the conductor, Lawrence Foster, on the first night should have pondered the problems of playing this tender, imaginative score with the wrong orchestra in the wrong house; while those who seemed inclined to write off the work itself might equally ponder how Covent Garden could endorse a production which so obviously beached Rossini's fragile craft at least half-a-dozen times in the first fifteen minutes. One of the most remarkable aspects of the score is its long opening movement, an almost seamless blend of choruses, charged recitatives, arlosos and duets, all delicately infiltrated by Elena's touching barcarolle. The opening scenes are a single harmonious unit, a thirty-five-minute exposition and exploration of the flowering of a guileless romance between Elena and the disguised huntsman-king. Frank Corsaro's production, which in most other respects might be thought unexceptionable, sacrifices musical continuity to scenic effects, a flaw made the more disruptive by poor technical co-ordination.

In an attempt to cover over the administrative, critical and, until the late 1960s, scholarly neglect of Rossini in the past hundred years, it has often been argued that the revival of his music is made impossible by the demands it makes on singers. It is an argument which has little basis in reality. The Covent Garden revival is tolerably sung in the circumstances, and that there are good alternative casts elsewhere is abundantly clear from the new CBS recording of the opera successfully derived from a recent Pesaro production, conducted by Maurizio Pollini, with Katia Ricciarelli. Covent Garden's Lady of the Lake is Frederica von Stade. Physically and to some extent vocally she is an ideal interpreter of a role in which Rossini's music – classically chaste, romantically idealizing – admirably reflects Scott's idea of his heroine: "And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace / A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace / Of finer form or lovelier face". What von Stade lacks is the confidence to turn the demure heroine of Act One into the finale's vocally resplendent protagonist. Her immediate predecessor in the role at Covent Garden, Giuditta Grisi in the 1840s, was said by Chorley to have brought to "Tanti affetti" a certain "triumphancy", a grandeur and finish of style, and a sense of "intentional challenge". Such qualities were more obviously there in Marilyn Horne's singing of the role of Elena's lover, the travesti role of Malcolm. Horne has not sung at Covent Garden since 1970 and from some way back in the house the voice sounded smaller than one had remembered; but few singers command Rossinian coloratura more surely or communicate its vibrancy and histrionic power better than Horne. Both Chris Merritt as King James V and David Rendall as Rodrigo acquit themselves well and the great Act Two trio, a memorable sequence in Scott and Rossini though tamely staged by Corsaro, helps redeem an act which, as Chorley noted, is little more than a concert in costume. As Elena's father, Douglas, the Greek bass, Dimitri Kavrakos, makes a powerful impression. His Act One aria fills the house rather more imposingly than some of the attendant choruses which are sketchily sung by the male voices. The time cannot be far away when the new Rossini scholarship will finally penetrate the minds and imaginations of administrators, producers and conductors; for the moment, though, Rossinians are better served by CBS's new recording of *La donna del lago* than they are by the Covent Garden revival, which has the air of swilling some rather good claret somewhat incongruously around the bottom of an oversize barrel.

A flickering tale

Michael Meyer

AUGUST STRINDBERG
Dreamplay
The Pit, Barbican

The legend that Strindberg was a person of unrelieved gloom dies hard, although many witnesses have testified to his frequent high spirits, wit, sense of fun and brilliance in conversation. These qualities are present in his plays, and woe betide the translator or director who ignores them, whether in *The Father* and *Miss Julie* or *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*. Strindberg knew as well as Sophocles and Shakespeare that tragedy is far more moving if the audience is occasionally allowed to laugh.

A Dream Play, written in 1901, was his boldest experiment: "a mixture", he explained, "of memories, experiences, free fancies, incongruities and improvisations . . . . Time and place do not exist."An imprisoned officer moves back into his childhood, forward into senility, then finds himself an adult sitting among schoolboys and unable to multiply two by two. A god's daughter descends to earth and undergoes the tribulations of marriage and poverty, while a servant pastes paper over the windows to keep out the air. A stage-door keeper knits an endless shawl representing human sorrows; a quarantine master wears a black mask to help him forget himself. All these exist in the dream consciousness of the poet, who himself occasionally joins in their adventures. Like most of Strindberg's plays, it needs cutting by as much as a third of its length; thus abridged, it can work brilliantly, as has been shown by Ingmar Bergman in his 1971 World Theatre production, Mike Ockrent at the Edinburgh Traverse in 1974, and Martin Jenkins on radio in 1982.

John Barton, for his production at the Pit, has made a new version based on a literal translation by Inga-Stina Ewbank. His programme note tells that it contains "some cuts but not many", but that he has "hugely transposed and reshaped the original text and structure". The result, unlike Ted Whitehead's inventive rewriting of *The Dance of Death*, is strangely unfaithful to the spirit of the original. Little of the wit, poetry and eloquence remain. Typically, Strindberg's own description of the play as "a flickering tale" is translated in the programme note as "a wobbling narrative", which not unfairly sums up what we get here. It is never made clear to the audience that everything takes place in the poet's mind; the poet merely becomes a minor character who turns up halfway through.

Long passages of Strindberg at his most didactic and tedious are retained – as when, after nearly two hours without an interval, the daughter lies down and delivers a lecture on eastern religion – but several of the best scenes are thinned out and enfeebled. The great climax when the characters come forward with their offerings to be burned falls flat, with the iron stove, supposedly at furnace heat, standing on a wooden table while the daughter rests her hands on it and the documents, etc, protrude visibly unharmed. The scene of the window-pasting loses its claustrophobia because the servant stands twenty feet above and away from the married couple as though on a different floor instead of in the same tiny room. Foulstrand, representing Hell, is scarcely differentiated from Fairhaven, where all seems happy, and the ferociously funny scenes in the schoolroom and among the dons scarcely raise a laugh.

Mr Barton's talent has always been for vision and conception rather than for telling actors what to do. This worked splendidly in Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, when he had an experienced cast, but the actors in *Dreamplay* are mostly young and give the impression of groping blindly. The poor man's lawyer whose face, Strindberg writes, reflects "every kind of crime and vice", becomes a Pickwickian figure with a natural smile. The officer, who should vary manically between optimism and gloom, is played as a permanent depressive. The fine roles of the stage-door keeper, the poet, the bill-poster and the quarantine master go for nothing. Only Penny Downie as the daughter emerges with credit. The high spirits which abound in Strindberg's text are sadly absent, and the result is a confused and tedious evening.

Bridging the Homeric gap

Stephen Wall

SHAKESPEARE
Troilus and Cressida
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

The Prologue's admission that *Troilus and Cressida* contains only "what may be digested in a play" seems to concede that there is something fundamentally intractable about its donnée. Although it is not the rarity in performance it once was, modern productions have not found it easy to make either its material or its manner accessible to audiences for whom the Trojan war might just as well not have taken place. The inescapable power and presence of the Homeric protagonists for Shakespeare's public are indicated in his text by the remarkable self-consciousness that many of them show about their status – most notably perhaps in the scene where Troilus, Cressida and Pandarus type-cast themselves "to the world's end". Part of the play's curious and individual tone comes from the calculated and exploited discrepancy between the immense heroic prestige of the dramatis personae and the way their received reputation is overtly or obliquely impugned. Now, however, it has become so difficult to take epic seriously that the sting of mock-epic is no longer felt, and the precarious and fascinating balance in *Troilus and Cressida* between homage and disrespect, between heroic and anti-heroic, has become extremely difficult to re-create theatrically.

In practice, the usual way of bridging the Homeric gap has been to make the war itself seem real by connecting it with some more recent conflict which has a meaningful iconography for us, even though that probably means sacrificing the ideal and universal character which its heroism had in Shakespeare's day. Howard Davies's new production at Stratford has settled for a policy of late nineteenth-century Balkanization. We seem to be somewhere between Millais's picture "The Black Brunswicker" and Jean Renoir's film *La Grande Illusion*. The stage is dominated by Ralph Koltai's set, which suggests some manor or chateau not far from the front line which has been commandeered to serve as GHQ. Despite signs of the new military technology – primitive telephone, telegraph, typewriter – the place is in a tatty condition, and not surprisingly so with batmen like Thersites to tidy it up. The same interior is made to serve both Greek and Trojan camps, so those who don't know the play may be confused at times, as well as puzzled by the characters' ability to sight Greek tents and Trojan walls at the back of the stalls. Nevertheless the strategy does at least underline the point that both parties are locked into the same situation. "Wars and lechery" are relentless levellers.

The war side of the play ends in a strongly orchestrated "show" (in First World War terms), with much off-stage shell and machine-gun fire and an impressive display of the resources of Stratford's lighting grid. Achilles has Hector shot – not cut – down by the Myrmidons, but hand-to-hand conflicts involve the usual sword-play. This mix is better managed than in the current National Theatre *Coriolanus*, but it still seems uneasy. The lechery is more successful. It is particularly associated with a battered upright used for entertainment during those periods of suspended action of which this play is so intriguingly full, and most tellingly in the scene between Paris and Helen which approaches a Brecht/Weill kind of decadence; their humiliation of Pandarus is strikingly brutal. Pandarus himself (dressed in light Beerbohmish suiting) remains at the piano throughout the alarms and excursions of Act Five.

Such determined counterpoint is typical of the production's tendency to rely on stage effect rather than grapple with the admittedly considerable problems presented by its idiosyncratic diction. In such an environment, the prose is likely to come off best, and some of the off-duty moments feel modern and fresh. Juliet Stevenson's Cressida has a powerful contemporary style – too much so really for Anton Lesser's impetuous and often flimsy Troilus – and she makes the character's underlying motivation entirely credible. She is helped in this by the ugly suggestiveness of the scene in which she is gang-kissed by the Greek commanders; such a girl at such a time and place needs a Diomede to protect her from worse things. Both lovers, however, rush the language so much that the text becomes expendable in the search for the subtext. Elsewhere – and despite the welcome presence of such veterans as Joseph O'Conor (Agamemnon) and Mark Dignam (Nestor) – the verse is not spoken with much feeling for its particular style. Although David Burke's Hector is strongly spoken, the debates between the Trojans are not much more convincing than those among the Greeks. It is hard for those Homeric figures to achieve their intended stature if their language is not given its due. Something of what is neglected can be glimpsed in Alan Rickman's insolent Achilles, which has an arresting intensity.

If the heroes of the Trojan war do not at least go through the motions of living up to their historic names, there seems little shock-value in rubbishing them. One of the odd effects of this production is that Thersites, the normally rebarbative railer at the great, becomes almost lovable. Alun Armstrong plays him as an insubordinate, but not uncongenial Tynesider rather than as the scrofulous heap sometimes seen, and he is much more like other Shakespearean fools than usual. His denigration is no more than barrack-room bickering; the fact that nothing else holds fashion apart from wars and lechery leaves him almost upset. As a result, he perversely attains some of that dignity which his superiors have failed to assume, and thus underlines the absence of that heroic scale which this interesting but reductive production has not attempted to supply.

The father feller

Alan Brownjohn

ISAURE de SAINT PIERRE
Richard Dadd – His Journals
Translated by Dominic di Barnardi and Noëlle Domke
282pp. Henley on Thames: Aidan Ellis. £9.50.
0 856281328

Isaure de Saint Pierre first discovered the Victorian painter and patricide Richard Dadd in the Tate Gallery exhibition of 1974. She felt immediately impelled to investigate the enigma of this artist of high promise, recalled by a friend as "gentle, kind, considerate and affectionate", who at the age of twenty-six put an abrupt end to his career by the bloody and premeditated murder of his father.

The result of Mlle de Saint Pierre's long researches is this account of Dadd's madness, a flawed yet weirdly stylish and original book. The "journals" of the title is a misnomer, since the work takes the form of a continuous first-person narrative set out in chapters, with constant kaleidoscopic switches from present to past and back again: it is not an imagined set of diary entries. It comes out as something between a conventional fiction and what we have begun to call, clumsily, a "faction". The author necessarily invents detail, in order to elaborate on Dadd's state of mind; but she also recounts with punctilious accuracy the known facts of the artist's life, using letters, reminiscences and family papers, and the archives of Bethlem Hospital and Broadmoor, where he was confined for the rest of his life after the court declared him insane. She has even followed the route taken by Dadd when he made an arduous and risky grand tour through Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy to Greece, Turkey and the Middle East, the excursion on which signs of his lunacy first appeared.

In a sense, Dadd's acknowledged masterpiece, the exquisitely contrived and deeply disquieting picture called "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke", requires no understanding beyond the recognition that it is true madness and nothing else but mad. This little canvas lifts a veil on a chilling labyrinth of the Victorian unconscious, a place where everything decorous, genteel and whimsical is transmuted into nightmare. (On the dust-jacket of *Richard Dadd – His Journals* it gains an added dimension of oddity by being reproduced the wrong way round: look at the original in the Tate, and you will see that the Feller strikes from right to left, not left to right.) The documents reveal that Dadd thought himself the servant of Osiris, with a mission to cast out demons from the possessed by killing them. Is there much more to be said or found out about that?

De Saint Pierre elaborates extensively on this delusion, perhaps too extensively in those passages of her novel set in Egypt and spelling out the extremities of Egyptian mythology. It could have been more interesting to have her novelist's theories as to how and why not only Richard Dadd but three of his siblings, out of a family of seven children (with a cultivated and solicitous father) went crazy; the large Victorian family was often a hothouse of desperation, lunacy and genius. What she does offer, with scarcely any sort of supporting evidence, is a conjecture that Dadd was profoundly and not very innocently bisexual, with every sexual encounter a disturbing aesthetic experience. She does not allow this element to run away, as it might have done, into mere soft-core Pre-Raphaelite fantasy; but much better are the passages where de Saint Pierre explores Dadd's childhood in Chatham and London, establishes his place as the leading light in the group of young talents known as "the Clique" (Augustus Egg and William Frith were among their number), and follows his Mediterranean travels.

More impressive still is the way in which she places herself at Dadd's side in Bethlem and Broadmoor – unexpectedly gentle and enlightened institutions as far as the artist was concerned – while he paints, and receives doctors and artist friends. While it helps the reader to have the illustrated book of the Tate exhibition at hand, the vivid and loving detail of Isaure de Saint Pierre's prose (in an excellent translation) provides a startlingly clear version of Dadd's alarming creative processes and a detachedly sympathetic portrait of the man himself.

Humayne Beenings

Peter Reading

NORMAN LAVERS
The Northwest Passage
137pp. New York: Fiction Collective.
Distributed in the UK by John Calder. £9.25 (paperback, £4.95).
0 914590863

An admirable invention: a jobless history teacher/amateur naturalist, living on the North-West American coast, discovers, in the local museum's basement, incomplete journals by three members of an expedition which had set off in 1749 from England to find the Northwest Passage, and he sets about editing them, incorporating his own diary entries of domestic and ecological observation.

So far so good. To this are added an "INTRO" and nineteen footnotes set in upper case in what we are to assume is the peculiar English of a future century, implying that the eighteenth- and twentieth-century journals are themselves being edited by a scholarly *sapiens* successor after an unspecified nuclear débâcle.

Scope for pastiche, and we get it, along with an engrossing parallelism – "BECUZ MI BAG IS LIT/LANG . . . THIS GIVE ME CHANCE TO STUDI 20 CENT THEN/LANG NEXT TO 18 CENT THEN/LANG NEXT TO OF COURSE WE'S NOW/LANG" (unconvincingly, the already endangered apostrophe survives into NOW/LANG). NOW/LANG is a bit unimaginative, like a Stanly Unwin telegram: "NOW/TIME NO MORE HAVE MORNING SICK NO MORE HAVE TOOTH 'ache' (BECUZ OF TOOTH PLASTI-COTE)".

The eighteenth-century manuscripts, though, delightfully limn their three writers – the seaman-like Capt Mountague, the homosexual Dr Harris and David Jenkins (Davie), the ship's naturalist who most mirrors the jobless teacher/editor. Quasi-eighteenth-century spelling obtains, and the journals have the same compelling effect as authentic ones of the time. They can become linguistic slapstick, albeit amusing – in Australia (much time in southern waters, pre-Cook) they encounter *Humayne Beenings!*:

Yer cad f.ck the Yong un if yer likes, I of the *Boys* said to us as we came up. The old *Man* dont mind a Fart, he just Grins. She arn't Bewtifull, but tis better nor frigging in yer Hand. *Christie* is waitin for yers to have a Go if yer likes, fore he has his, so yers wont catch his Clap.

The personal, erotic and ornithological notes of the twentieth-century editor punctuate and echo the discoverers' accounts: Davie leches with a Polynesian girl, Dr Harris with a native lad, while the editor and his wife cavort; Davie's wife, poignantly depicted, dies in childbirth and the editor's wife nearly does the same; Davie anticipates Darwin by remarking the evolutionary diversity of the finches on the Galapagos, while the editor recounts sightings of North-West American birds (especially good on raptors). As the expedition inadvertently leaves behind it a trail of viral infection – the trivial common cold of sophisticated westerners, fatal to the tribes they visit from Polynesians to Eskimos – we are made aware that the editor and his wife are justified in their anxiety about the local nuclear reactor. By the time the last of the travellers dies (parasitic worms from polar bear meat), holed-up in a permafrost cave with a stiff mammoth, the ominousness of the ultra-editorial NOW/LANG gloss becomes clear.

Throughout, we glimpse, like Gulliver, the worst excesses of men (its Australia, indiscriminate kangaroo carnage), and their Utopian potentials. *Post sapiens* is complacent in conceiving Utopia differently: (on mass extinctions) "MAN HAD TO CHOOSE EITHER THE LIFE SEEN IN POEM WHERE MAN GOED AN BUGS ANIMALS STAYED OR LIFE WHERE MAN STAYED AN BUGS GOED"; (on atavistic human aspirations) "I GOED AN HAVED MY BRAYNE SELLS FIXED THEN I HAPI AGEN"

Short histories

Savkar Altinel

PORTER HILL
The Bombay Marines
220pp. Souvenir Press. £7.95.
0 285 626515

On returning to Bombay from a mission in the Arabian Sea in 1761, the year of the final defeat of the French forces in India, young Captain Adam Horne of the private navy of the East India Company is ordered to mount an operation to kidnap the captured French commander-in-chief General Thomas Nully from Fort St George in Madras and put him on a merchantman bound for England. Not only does the Company refuse to explain why such a course of action is necessary but there is also an acute shortage of manpower, and Horne has to rely on a crew recruited from among the thieves and murderers in the dungeons of Bombay. A good plot and well-described locations are somewhat spoiled by an excessive amount of violence, most of it perpetrated by the hero.

BERNARD CORNWELL
Sharpe's Honour
320pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 221426 1

Richard Sharpe, no stranger to Iberian battlefields, finds his military experience of little use when an old enemy, the small, bespectacled Major Ducos of French Intelligence, comes up with a devious plan for winning the Peninsular War and destroying Sharpe himself in the process. Tricked, with the connivance of the beautiful courtesan Hélène, into a rash act which leads to his being framed for murder and blamed for the worsening relations between his country and Spain, the English officer is soon a disgraced man on the run – before the Vitoria Campaign of June, 1813 finally gives him a chance to redeem himself. That every Sharpe novel is better than the last, devotees have long taken for granted, but this masterly narrative, spare as the hero's soldierly frame and moving with the speed of a bullet, is no less worthy of high praise for that.

LYNN GUEST
Yedo
292pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0 370 306082

In the newly "opened" Japan of the 1860s, young Pev Fitzpaine of the British Legation is befriended by Tada Shoh, a doctor interested in Western medicine, and Umegawa, a fifteen-year-old prostitute. Not everyone, however, is well-disposed towards foreigners, and in the background a secret brotherhood is determined to achieve a return to isolationism at all costs. The plot is perhaps rather basic and the ending a trifle abrupt, but the characters are observed sympathetically and life in nineteenth-century "Yedo", as Tokyo was then known, is described in fascinating detail.

DORIS GRUMBACH
The Ladies
210pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241 114535

A fictionalized retelling of the story of the Ladies of Llangollen who first scandalized and then charmed eighteenth-century society by eloping and setting up home together. Beautiful, witty, touching: and a must for those who are unaware that "alternative" life-styles somewhat pre-date the present day.

RACHEL SUMMERSON
Dishonourable Intentions
297pp. Sigdwick and Jackson. £9.95.
0 283 991577

Amy Pollard, daughter, inevitably, of a country clergyman, takes up a position as governess to the spoiled younger children of the *nouveau riche* Bartlett family and finds, like many an impecunious fictional governess before her, that her place is little above that of the servants below stairs. Also in the accepted manner, however, matters soon improve when romance comes her way, with both the Bartlett son Edwin and Harry Rissington of the local gentry taking an interest in her. Unfortunately, the author then decides that enough attention has been paid to the conventions of one genre and those of another must be honoured, with a demonstration of the beastliness of men and an unhappy ending. Her novel is uncomfortably divided, then, but equipped with workmanlike characterization and not without humour.

MILES FRANKLIN
All That Swagger
418pp. Sirius. Paperback, £4.95.
0 207 149984

Miles Franklin's novel about the settling of New South Wales, written after she had already made a name for herself with *My Brilliant Career* and other works, and first published almost exactly half a century ago, begins with the decision of Danny Delacy to leave his native Ireland for "the furthest extremity of the globe" in the 1830s. He ends up losing a leg to the Outback, but goes on working his land, and the same perseverance is demonstrated by subsequent generations of Delacys, through all the ravages of various wars and economic depressions, until the pioneer spirit finds its ultimate expression in Danny's great-grandson Brian who becomes a daring aviator. The radical and feminist sentiments, and the tributes to technology and progress, are expressed in a quaint idiom which itself now seems a part of history. These, however, remain subordinate to a firm story-line and the portrayal of Australia itself, whose vastness, inhospitality and beauty are vividly evoked.

SIDNEY ALEXANDER
Nicodemus
293pp. Ohio University Press. £18.95.
0 821407783

The concluding volume of Sidney Alexander's trilogy, begun in the 1950s, concerning the life of Michelangelo deals with the last three decades before the death of the Florentine artist, during which, in increasingly poor health and living in exile in Rome, he executed some of his best-known works and produced a substantial body of poetry. The author's deep knowledge of the period comes through at every turn, but even more impressive are the elegant poetic meditations by the four narrators – Michelangelo himself, his close friend Tommaso de'Cavalieri, his compatriot Donato Gianotti, and Elia, a Jewish physician – on art, time, love, politics and the beauty and frailty of the human body.

RICHARD WOODMAN
The Corvette
232pp. John Murray. £8.95.
0719541972

This, his fifth adventure, sees Nathaniel Drinkwater given temporary command of the captured French corvette Melusine and ordered to escort the British whaling fleet to the Arctic, where the elements and an enemy privateer combine to harass him. The Drinkwater series has now really found its sea legs, acquiring a solidity of characterization and a narrative drive that were missing from some of the earlier volumes, and it is good to know that both author and hero still have Trafalgar and many more years of Napoleonic Wars ahead of them.

ROBERT WALES
Harry
277pp. Robert Royce. £8.95.
0947728090

In 1882 "the biggest cattle-theft of all time" was organized by a group of Queensland ranch-hands who set out to drive fifteen hundred stolen animals across twelve hundred miles of hostile terrain. Robert Wales's novel based on this incident is a remarkable creation, lyrical, humorous, exciting and, above all, excellent in its depiction of the three main characters: Harry Walford, the illiterate, inexperienced but resourceful leader of the thieves; "Wooly", the Aborigine tracker sent after them; and Lord Wallah Wallah Banjo, the magnificent white bull at the head of the stolen herd.

The Guardsman who Dropped It

Toby Fitton

ANDREW SINCLAIR
Beau Bumbo
197pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 297 78608 3
The Breaking of Bumbo
200pp. 0 571 13460 2
My Friend Judas
224pp. 0 571 13461 0
Faber. Paperback, £2.25 each.

Andrew Sinclair's new novel attempts to revive Bumbo Bailey, last heard of in *The Breaking of Bumbo* (1958), the vigorous tale of a National Service Guards officer whose egotism flourishes, in spite of attempts at regimentation to a not wholly disagreeable system, in a world of coffee bars, "Madsummer" fornication and callow protest against Suez. *The Breaking of Bumbo* (now reissued in paperback) re-reads quite well as a period piece, better, indeed, than *My Friend Judas* (also reissued), the novel of Cambridge life published in 1959, which shares all its predecessor's quirks of style and presentation (including conversations so indented on the page as to resemble concrete poetry). *Judas* seems very dated, recalling the era of wire sculptures and of trying to make it with lush totties on, or alongside, Vespa motor scooters. It scarcely deserved resurrection.

A quarter-century and more of under-specified interim – a period which Simon Raven would cover in a dozen volumes rather than a dozen sentences – finds Bumbo at the end of a lucrative career as a gossip columnist, and of a marriage (shotgun in origin) to a rich wife who has borne him two stereotypically rebellious children. His face, which even when he was a subaltern was like that of "a melancholy bloodhound", now "hangs on him as comfortably as an old leather slipper". He is still typecast as a Bateman-like "Guardsman who Dropped It", prone to personal and financial misfortune which only serves to emphasize a cynicism and egotism honed by experience since the days of his disgrace on the paradeground.

National Service was a formative experience for him, and for old comrades who gather at a Brigade Squadron reunion dinner for some fun-and-games with a chandelier, and some foul language from their dear old Drill Sergeant, in order to provide a few direct echoes of *The Breaking of Bumbo*. Personalities are revived, however, less for renewed narrative purposes than in order to express particular revulsions – from the worlds of charity balls ("the usual mob of wall-to-wall nobodies"), the city (the fat, sharp face, held together by greed, of "a man who would not lend you a used match") and of literary prizes. For the last – here awarded, after undue influence has been brought to bear, to an anthology of women's lavatory graffiti – we are treated to one of Sinclair's lists of names, including "Bromide Hunslinger, each of whose Methusalean biographies was an event to be dismissed with reverence". A concordance to these (not too difficult, all the same, for an ill-informed reader to devise) should have been provided, identifying a Marquess of Headstudton, a country house called Curmugeondley, a Lady Rosanna Jambon, etc, etc.

It is, however, the world of film finance and production, where our hero has been trapped into injudicious investment of literary effort and precariously-backed money, which receives the severest mauling. This is a sleazy scenario, where bent impresarios smile like Halloween pumpkins and crooked Aussie financiers ply their nasty trade as the complications of a divided contract (as elaborate in its way as an eighteenth-century booksellers' conger) are laid out. The stars are no better: the liser-tongued Lettice Laguna who "had always confused persistence with genius, which she thought was an infinite capacity for giving pains", and "The Duke" himself ("the famous lustre of his blue eyes was lidded, waiting for its adrenalin eyebath before the next take").

The incidental technicalities of the business are fully revealed – a "charlie-bar" intruded to cast a perpetual shadow over the actress's double chin, for example – and so is the way in which Bumbo proves so adept at adjusting and compromising his script to suit commercial requirements. This is easier for him in his journalist's role, "because he could arrange words that would do somersaults and jump through fiery hoops". They do not jump well enough for Sinclair, who (as in his first novels) tries so very hard. King's Road extravagances are seen as "raging out to outrage, a sore sight for eyes", and there is much else in this undergraduate vein. This literary firework display is much less sparkling than it was intended to be, and there are many annoying imprecisions: stalagmites grow from the Berkeley ceiling, D-notices are misunderstood, the former Guardees drink 1939 Cockburn port, and the "Methusalean" biographies mentioned above might have been better described as "Morphean".

In the film editor's workshop, life seems to follow craft, the editor's own life showing as "a series of disconnected small episodes with girls that he could not cut together", a world of minor sexual encounters in which the conversation begins to sound to him like subtitles. Bumbo's own performance, after the bleak experiences of divorce and entanglement with the movie moguls, is similarly assessed by the cinematographic hardware. The book ends with Bumbo Bailey being video-recorded by a teenage amateur. Even Bumbo, given less to introspection than to sardonic dispraise of others, has cause to ponder when he finds himself erased by a precocious producer of the new generation. "Oh, I wiped you. . . . Your performance wasn't valid, you see." Cut.

Indo-British displacements

Maria Couto

NAYANTARA SAHGAL
Rich Like Us
256pp. Heinemann. £9.50.
0434666106
JON THURLEY
The Burning Lake
285pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0370308557

Both Nayantara Sahgal and Jon Thurley are inheritors of what may be called an Indo-British sensibility: the Indian, Sahgal, as an insider by more than birth (niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, marriage into the top echelons of industry and Government) and the Englishman, Thurley, who was born in India and spent his childhood there, as the outsider.

Sahgal's novel *Rich Like Us*, winner of this year's Sinclair award, examines the Indo-British cultural inheritance and its links with contemporary events in India. It takes off from the Emergency, a traumatic time when in the name of modernization and social change the fundamental structures of a democratic State and the rule of law were overthrown. Some of the ignominious aspects of this time form the background to parts of *Midnight's Children*, and both Sahgal and Salman Rushdie use this period to illustrate the confrontation between liberal traditions and technological imperatives, a severely stratified society and the masses seeking to break these constraints, modern infusions and the intransigence of realities not easily labelled as economic, social and political "evils".

With corrupt politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats at the centre of the narrative and a maimed beggar on the periphery, the novel offers a cohesive and intimate portrait of the intrigues of power, but it is unable to attempt a resolution of the conflict between culture and technology. Sweeping, indiscriminate modernization can inspire disgust: "Happyola" imported to slake the thirst of the urban consumer is no answer for mass unemployment and underfulfilment. Sonali, the occasional narrator of her own and other histories, resigns from the Civil Service because she will not countenance the production of "Happyola", and is humiliated. Rose, whose robust matter-of-factness cuts through the cant, hypocrisies and subterfuges of the opinion-makers and the wielders of power, is the cockney memsahib who finds poise and equanimity in an uninhibited acceptance of human relationships irrespective of colour and class.

Through her the narrative suggests that the need for economic solutions is only one dimension. She is largely unaware of the refinements of liberal sensibilities back home in England and has little patience for them in her new home in India as the wife of the worldly and urbane Ram. Her relationship with her shrewd father-in-law, a small trader, is perhaps the truest measure of Indo-British dealings. When business is flagging he learns to appreciate her advice for improvements and change, and in the process gets to know and love her personal qualities; but she first learns his ways and communicates with him on his terms, by sitting cross-legged opposite him on the floor.

The novel's many voices recreate family, social and public relationships with accuracy, occasionally slipping into overkill; but suggest only remotely the reverberations of the Indo-British experience outside the structures of power. A discussion of issues such as Sahgal attempts should extend beyond the history and displacement of élites into a recognition of the forces of the land and its people.

Some of these insights into cultural strengths are revealed in Jon Thurley's first novel, *The Burning Lake*; in fact his narrator, David, finds the vitality he needs in order to cope with his present life in England by evoking the memories of his childhood in India. David, a son of the Raj, begins his account with the break-up of his marriage and the violent death of his elder brother Jonathan. The terrible death causes David to reflect on the different stages of his life. Its visionary and idyllic moments, as well as the rites of passage into a world of incomprehensible tragedy and destruction, take place in India between 1946 and 1949, when as boys he and Jonathan witness the savagery of partition riots which engulf their Indian friends. British India transmuted through the eyes of childhood gives both power and poise to an intensely discursive novel, that winds its occasionally ponderous way through the rigours of boarding school – for empire builders – in England, academic and social achievements in Cambridge and professional success in London where Jonathan becomes a property developer and David a painter. Its best sections are not those that furnish elaborate details of heady undergraduate life, but those that attempt a total recall of relationships with people and nature – fields, streams, sunsets and cloud – in India. Every adult experience is sifted, related to others and traced back for understanding and resolution to those early years of bliss followed by violence.

DAVID WILLIAMS
Wedding Treasure
222pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0333387155

Merchant banker Mark Treasure and his actress wife Molly drive down to Herefordshire in the Rolls for the wedding of an old friend's step-daughter; but lust, violence and sudden death cancel the ceremony. In his eighth Mark Treasure novel David Williams has given himself more space to create character, depict setting and weave plot: the result is a thick, rich salmagundi in the classical vein, admirably spiced with consanguineous complexities.

STEPHEN COOK
Upperdown
207pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0340361069

Bomb explosion at Upperdown, a minor league public school, slightly injures martinet housemaster "Killer" Rhage, who later gets a note threatening his life. Crime is investigated by Detective Chief Superintendent Albert Crump, aided by the unpleasantly lubricious Detective Sergeant Slicer. Though perhaps not quite the hoot the author – judging by his choice of names – believes it to be, *Upperdown* is certainly well-engineered and frothily amusing.

T. J. Binyon

All wounds

Tim Dooley

WILSON HARRIS
Carnival
172pp. Faber. £10.95.
0 571 134491

Everyman Masters and Jonathan Weyl are respectively central character and first-person narrator in *Carnival*; their names recall figures from the beginnings of our fictional and dramatic tradition and signal Wilson Harris's engagement with that tradition, his interest in developing and extending its forms. Masters and Weyl are Virgil and Dante in a pilgrimage through the twentieth century. Masters, who is murdered in the opening chapter, instructs Weyl in a dream to write "a biography of spirit, as the fiction of my life". The resulting work presents experience cyclically, in a symbolic pattern of repetition and variation. Its unravelling can be a rather purgatorial experience for the reader too.

The object of *Carnival*'s pilgrimage is an understanding of suffering. Weyl comments that "translation of the wounds of humanity was indeed the law of fiction" and that "the blow that *dis-members* yet may occasion one to *re-member*". Masters's stabbing in London in 1982 recalls a wound he received as a nine-year-old in 1926. While playing with a cousin on the foreshores of New Forest (Harris's fictional name for his own birthplace, Guyana), Masters cut himself on a shaman's bone axe "shaped like a knife from El Doradan carnival". Fleeing from the suspicious advances of a stranger, Masters ran home to catch sight of his mother's crying face reflected in a mirror. He saw through this "glass woman" to the secret shame of his birth. His legal father, coloured like his mother, was not his natural father; his mother had contemplated an abortion rather than face giving birth to a child who would share the colour of the white man who had raped her.

A similar nexus of sexual shame and racial or cultural oppression underlies some of the other interleaved stories which give a focus to *Carnival*'s meandering meditation. Both Masters's cousin and Weyl's lawyer father, Martin, take on the carnival role or mask of Doubting Thomas, whose "dual hands" serve both to explore and create a wound. A collision with a market woman leads Masters's cousin on a descent through the "modulated Inferno, modulated Purgatory, of twentieth century colonial limbo", and he comes to understand some of the roots of its poverty and violence before confronting the epitome of degradation, the drunken Johnny Flatfoot, czar of carnival. He stabs Johnny in the mistaken belief that he is protecting the "marble woman" whose tray of eggs he has previously broken, whose loss he has promised to pay back in gold. Martin Weyl, already suffering the "inner wound" of a marriage forced on him by the demands of respectability, is given the role of Thomas by Quabbas, a schoolteacher who dies of a heart attack provoked by suppressed lust for his niece. He goes on to ruin himself and accidentally traumatize his son defending an Amerindian accused of matricide for slicing off his sick mother's breasts and giving them to the sun. Weyl fails in the case and dies soon after as the result of a collision with a bicyclist, who may have been the Thomas who collided with the market woman.

Martin Weyl's attempt to understand the "savage heart" of his nation is parallelled by Masters's voyage to the country's interior, with its waterfall oracle and dancing boulders – images of a universe where nothing is certain. Later, Masters tries to break the circle of suffering by moving from plantation to factory, from overseer to dancer's understudy. But in London, as in New Forest, he is the cause of suffering as well as its victim, as when he reveals to James and Aimée the vanity underlying what they had thought of as love. *Carnival* celebrates the impossibility of purity yet ends with a surrender to the unknowable, a trust in the "love that moves the sun and the other stars". Its mechanical paradoxes and inflated, sometimes preposterous rhetoric are highly resistible, but gradually, uncertainly, the complexity and ambition of its construction, its partial yet telling illuminations command a grudging admiration.

Sacrifice and inspiration

Roy Foster

MARY LOU KOHFELDT
Lady Gregory: The woman behind the Irish renaissance
366pp. Deutsch. £12.95.
0 233 97793 7

Mary Lou Kohfeldt delivers a hostage to fortune by retailing one quotation from her subject which every reviewer will be tempted to use: "I am just well known enough for some scribbler after my death to make a little book of me, full of stupidities." Her own book is better than this – and better than the arch observations in her introduction lead one to expect. But it raises problems none the less, implied in her criticism of Augusta Gregory's life of Hugh Lane: "it is not a great biography, because she never forgets herself for her subject". By committedly immersing herself in *her* subject, Dr Kohfeldt takes too much for granted. Secrecy, deviousness and disingenuousness mark the recollections (and letters) of all those involved in the "Irish Renaissance": Æ thought that Lady Gregory was just as inaccurate, for her purposes, as George Moore. Nor can the "renaissance" itself adequately be visualized as the old textbooks used to see the Industrial Revolution – a miraculous coincidence of personalities and inventions. At times, Kohfeldt comes perilously close to making both these mistakes.

None the less, the task she has set herself is worth while. In the twenty-odd years since Elizabeth Coxhead's perceptive *Lady Gregory: A literary portrait*, much scholarly attention has been focused on the theatre of the Gaelic revival: important reassessments have appeared by Ann Saddlemyer and others; figures like John Quinn and John Butler Yeats have received long overdue biographies; Augusta Gregory has even appeared playing an unexpectedly steamy role in Elizabeth Longford's account of the love affairs of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. There is new light to be cast on her strange odyssey, so sharply divided between youth – dutiful daughter of the philistine Big House at Roxborough, bride of a man old enough to be her grandfather, widowed chatelaine of an encumbered estate – and age: moving spirit of the Abbey Theatre, collaborator and inspiration of Yeats, playwright and public figure to the end. She preferred Grania to Deirdre, because Grania "took the shaping of her life into her own hands". If the disjunction between her own two lives remains sharp and rather unsatisfactory, it is probably unfair to blame Kohfeldt.

She must, however, be taken to task for an unfortunate idiom which occasionally lapses into raw vulgarity ("sneakiness", "dunked", "on track", and chapter headings like "Hitching her wagon to a Star; Yeats comes to Coole"). She can produce sentences whose primary function seems bewilderment ("Yeats's only real identity was with himself as a poet; his love for Ireland did not spring from deprivation but from an excess of individuality"). There are also maddening small inaccuracies throughout, usually about background matters – the eighteenth-century Volunteer movement is overinterpreted as nationalistic, church tithes are left uncompounded up to 1869, the Reform Bill of 1868 (which affected Irish boroughs only) is described as transforming Gregory's county electorate, and de Valera (too often rendered De Valera) is made to lead the Treaty delegates in 1921. It is also irritating to find Dun Emer Asiaticized into "Dun Emir", *Laveingro* described as the story of a "wondering" philologist, and Yeats served "bottle by bottle . . . with an especially fine vintage Torquey" (a château unknown to the wine dictionaries, but possibly a misprint for Tokay). More worrying is a cavalier approach to the chronology of certain key issues like Yeats's famous (if possibly mythologized) Paris meeting with Synge, and the eventual disposition of the Lane pictures; while the careless description of William Gregory as "English" begs the enormous question of the book, which should be that of Anglo-Irish identity and displacement.

The interesting themes in the story are not the Freudian suppositions about early conditioning, nor the rather contradictory characterizations (it is hard to visualize "a frivolous, pretty mother, whose chief interest in life was evangelical religion": and Augusta herself is described as both possessing faultless tact, and being guilty of "clumsy attempts at graciousness"). Nor is there need for undue worry about which literary luminary got to the Aran Islands first (it was probably the forgotten Emily Lawless, in any case). What one returns to is the background of Ascendancy – more fully dealt with here than before, though there could be much more about the peculiar nature of the Galway gentry, and the friendship with Violet Martin, that other great purveyor of local country idiom. The immersion in the Coole rather than the Roxborough tradition of landlordism, amplified by editing the Gregory memoirs, counted for a good deal; so did the exposure to Egypt and to Blunt, though Augusta remained a Unionist throughout her married life. For all her connections in the world of Belgravia drawing-rooms and with retired proconsuls, an anti-British note comes in early: she read Mitchel's *Jail Journal* during the 1887 Jubilee. Parnell haunts her imagery, and her later idolization of de Valera was all of a piece. Kohfeldt has Augusta Gregory collecting folklore after her meeting with Yeats in 1896, but she had visited Aran in 1893 and read *The Celtic Twilight* and Hyde's *Beside the Fire* surprisingly soon after publication. Where she was coming from is at least as interesting as where she went.

Kohfeldt prefers to concentrate on questions like that of collaboration. It was for long the fashion either to ridicule the entire Gregory *œuvre* or to say (as Gogarty did) that Yeats wrote her plays for her. Kohfeldt follows recent commentary in reasserting the Gregory role, and advances the case further: she wrote *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, and Yeats deliberately took the credit. ("Yeats, who had long suppressed awareness of Augusta's contribution, wondered in his ponderous way, 'Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?'") The argument must rest on the MS, a proportion of which is certainly annotated by Augusta: "all this by me alone". But the ideas behind the dialogue have generally been supposed those of Yeats, and Kohfeldt's deductions do not really convince otherwise: "[Augusta] reached back to the brightest emotion of her youth and grasped the flash of excitement when Mary Sheridan told of the cheering when the French landed at Killala." Given his involvement in the 1798 centenary three years before, the arguments for Yeats's identification with the events of that year are just as strong. More importantly, he never evaded the question of Augusta Gregory's collaboration with him on the plays of this period, in construction as well as dialogue; nor do the detailed commentaries on his drama (like Liam Miller's *The Noble Drama of W. B. Yeats*, which does not appear in Kohfeldt's bibliography). Indeed, he said as much in his prefaces ("[*The Pot of Broth*] may be more Lady Gregory's than mine, for I remember once urging her to include it in her own work, and her refusing to do so"). He certainly thought he wrote *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, at the time as well as later; indeed, less than a year later he described it as forming a deliberate trilogy with *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *The Hour Glass*. Augusta probably connived, to a certain extent, at emphasizing Yeats's role for public purposes. But, even in *Our Irish Theatre* (a work in which she occupied centre stage), she avoided laying sole claim: "Mr Yeats gave his *Kathleen* [sic] *ni Houlihan* to be produced by Mr Fay . . .", a play which "we wrote together". Mrs Yeats told Ann Saddlemyer that the Yeats–Gregory collaboration was so smooth that "they themselves could not say what belonged to whom", a point made at length by Yeats himself.

Kohfeldt loyally throws the weight all to the Gregory side; describing *The Travelling Man*, for instance, she refers in general terms to Yeats's involvement in earlier versions of a "little miracle play", but never names the draft which Yeats passed on to Augusta for rewriting in December 1902. This version of her heroine is psychologically compatible with a characteristic strongly and often convincingly stressed throughout Kohfeldt's biography: the overpowering will to serve, and if necessary to sacrifice. But while Augusta Gregory exercised powerful control over her personal emotions, and sacrificed much for family, husband, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, she seems never to have undervalued her writing, nor her considerable public success as a dramatist. Professionally speaking, she was not afraid to claim her worth.

Much of what is most engrossing here, in fact, is to do with family rather than work. The circumscribed Gregory finances (which she handled with admirable success); the *louche* Persse siblings; the too much loved, slightly chilly only son, and (after his inevitable death) the demanding daughter-in-law; the worshipped grandchildren – the autumnal sadness of Augusta Gregory's relationships with this circle, which comes powerfully through even the extracts from her journals edited by Lennox Robinson, is well explored here. Little wonder that she was drawn to the brilliant Yeats clan, though Jack evaded her advances and John Butler Yeats remained admiringly critical to the end. The relationship with "Willie" (she continued to be "Lady Gregory" to him) was the pivot of her later life; Kohfeldt has her reservations about him, but admits this much.

Augusta Gregory deserves to be remembered for much more, and this book helps make the point. She wrote about the Irish, Shaw approvingly said, as Molière wrote about the French. It was none the less easy to ridicule her, and many did – not only James Joyce ("that old hake Gregory . . . the mother with them bagses of trash") but also the Abbey critics who awarded her plays points on the PQ scale (for "Peasant Quality"). It is easy to be embarrassed at her dedication of *Cuchulain* to the country people around Coole:

> It is what I have tried to do, to take the best of the stories, or whatever part of each will fit best to one another, and that way to give a fair account of Cuchulain's life and death. I left out a good deal I thought you would not care about for one reason or another, but I put in nothing of my own that could be helped, only a sentence or so now and again to link the different parts together. I have told the whole story in plain and simple words, in the same way my old nurse Mary Sheridan used to be telling stories from the Irish long ago, and I a child at Roxborough. And indeed if there was more respect for Irish things among the learned men that live in the college at Dublin, where so many of these old writings are stored, this work would not have been left to a woman of the house, that has to be minding the place, and dividing her share of the food.

But to wince and pass by is to miss the point. "And I a child at Roxborough": the *faux-naïf* inversion of Irish-English, manically glossed by Hugh Kenner in *A Colder Eye* (another omission from Kohfeldt's bibliography), stands here for a conscious act of identification, as well as enabling a deliberately disingenuous use of language. ("The Irish in their ordinary living speech had the art, common to Hebrew poets, of repeating in the second part of the sentence an idea embodied in the first", she told an audience in 1921. "That sometimes led to an embellishment of the truth.") The identification which she chose would eventually produce the picture of her old age recorded in the Journals, and immortalized by Yeats: alone and untouched at Coole through war and civil war. It also brought her public recognition. In 1934 Yeats wrote that "her plays are constantly acted, not only in Dublin, but by little companies in village halls. Their names are as familiar as old proverbs." Earlier ("Anima Hominis", 1917) he made an oblique criticism:

> I have sometimes told one close friend that her only fault is a habit of harsh judgement with those who have not her sympathy, and she has written comedies where the wickedest people seem but bold children. She does not know why she has created that world where no one is ever judged, a high celebration of indulgence, but to me it seems that her ideal of beauty is the compensating dream of a nature wearied out by over-much judgement.

Yet for all her will to serve, she did not quite become a national monument: the fate of Coole, and until quite recently of her own literary output, is evidence of that. It is likely that the uncertainty of her reputation owes as much to suspicion of her origins (which Sean O'Casey thought much harder to overcome than his own) as to the difficult aspects and uneven quality of her work. This fact alone says a great deal about the Ireland she came from, and left behind.

Snarling narcissus

John Stokes

H. MONTGOMERY HYDE
Lord Alfred Douglas
366pp. Methuen. £14.95.
0 413 507904

H. Montgomery Hyde's training in the law has always set the tone for his efforts as a literary historian, and his skill at arguing a case on the grounds of hard evidence has served his most notorious client well. In a series of books, from *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, first published in 1948, to a full-scale biography in 1976, Hyde has worked consistently to set the record straight. His later books may be repetitious, often ignoring the opinions of others, but they certainly disprove Wilde's own dictum that it's usually Judas who writes the biography.

For Hyde now to undertake the life of Lord Alfred Douglas might easily look like betrayal, as if he had crossed the courtroom to speak on behalf of a rival client. Douglas, who loved litigation, would have probably seen it that way himself, assuming that absolution was at hand. In truth, Hyde's intentions are more modest. He aims merely for mitigation. Instead of character references that no one would credit, he stresses the difficulty of Douglas's situation, underplaying, for instance, the thoughtless promiscuity that accompanied Douglas's activities on behalf of persecuted Uranians in the early 1890s. Hyde does confirm, though, that Douglas was more loyal and more generous after Wilde's arrest than most people (including Wilde) have admitted, and that he behaved as well and as badly as might be expected from a man of his class with a disturbed family background and inherited enemies. It was Douglas's own contention that his foes in 1895 included the most powerful in the land; in particular, the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery. An elder brother, Lord Drumlanrig, had committed suicide in 1893, possibly as a result of a sexual entanglement with Rosebery, and Douglas often said that the second trial against Wilde was instigated in the hope that a conclusive verdict would distract attention from a Liberal Government riddled with homosexual vice. It was, and is, a seductive theory, but as long as the accusation of an Establishment cover-up remains unsubstantiated, so the possibility that Douglas was simply furthering a complicated family feud must persist.

The generous view of Douglas has to show that even paranoids can suffer from persecution. Perhaps, as Hyde implies, Douglas even had a point about Robert Ross who, although virtually canonized for his work in restoring Wilde's reputation and royalties after his death, eventually received for his pains some poisonous insults from Wilde's other great love. Apart from bouts of temperamental jealousy, "Bobbie and "Bosie" had stayed on reasonable terms until the time-bomb of *De Profundis* finally exploded in 1912. The knowledge that Ross had withheld the full extent of Wilde's ingratitude must have contributed much to the rancour of Douglas's middle age, and to his adoption of a brand of Catholic piety as aggressively self-justifying as the narcissistic Aestheticism of his youth.

Ross died pathetically in 1918, Douglas lived on cantankerously until 1945. A few pilgrims (Hyde among them) were still charmed, believing that they could glimpse the "slim gilt soul" of Wilde's imaginings behind the snarling grimace and bulbous nose of this difficult old man of Hove. Full rehabilitation of Bosie seems unlikely, though Hyde has once again assuaged Wilde's other thought on post-humous biography that it can "add to death itself a new terror".

Sacred Keeper, a biography of Patrick Kavanagh by his brother Peter Kavanagh first published in 1979, has been republished in a facsimile edition (403pp. National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine. $18. 0 91532 31 7). The author's approach is a personal one: "Towards the end of his life Patrick warned me in a letter that I was *the sacred keeper of his sacred conscience*. To fulfil that command is one of the reasons for writing this book."

Village voices

Barrie Dobson

RICHARD M. SMITH (Editor)
Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle
547pp. Cambridge University Press. £40.
0521266114

In the opening words of this formidable volume Richard Smith suggests that the "rebirth" of the history of the family can be dated as recently as 1972 and the publication of Peter Laslett's *Household and Family in Past Time*. If so, one can only congratulate Dr Smith for editing a collection of fifteen essays which prove beyond reasonable doubt that the infant has already come of age. For the rapidly growing number of academic scholars "with a commitment to the quantitative analysis of historical social structures" this book is self-evidently an indispensable companion to a wide range of complex theoretical and methodological issues. The work of Smith and his colleagues may be even more valuable to the more traditional social historian, less perhaps for what it proves beyond doubt (which is in many ways remarkably little) than for its revelation that large areas of previously unexplored human and family activity are now ripe for colonization.

Of all the various ventures into the "new history" so extensively canvassed in the 1960s, it is no doubt a sign of the times that the alliance between the economist and the historian seems currently to be proving the most profitable. Appropriately enough, much of that success derives from economic as well as intellectual influences: explicitly or implicitly, for example, a large number of contributors to this collection express their obligation to the financial support of the Social Science Research Council.

The thirteen authors who contribute to the volume, though they may (more or less) speak the same language, do not, however, necessarily share the same views. Perhaps inevitably, since it is dominated by accounts of intensive research in different regions, the book points not in one but in many directions and only partly succeeds in becoming more than the sum of its constituent parts. The first eight essays are all primarily concerned with problems relating to the land market and inheritance patterns in medieval English rural communities; but the seven later ones tend to move the emphasis away from the transmission of land as such to wider demographic issues and to a greater concern with what may have constituted the totality of the rural family's wealth. Such differences of approach are naturally conditioned by the nature of the original evidence available to the historian of land and kinship in different centuries; and it is one of the major incidental virtues of this work that it provides the basis for a more searching critique of, for example, the problems involved in interpreting late medieval court rolls than has hitherto appeared in print.

Nevertheless Smith seems altogether justified in supposing that one of the most important general morals to be derived from his collection is that in many questions relating to kinship and life-cycle "continuity is a better *leit-motif* than discontinuity". In particular, many early modern social historians would now agree (and many late medievalists would guess) that assumed changes in the quality of pre-industrial rural poverty are as likely to be the result of alterations in institutional attitudes towards the poor as of dramatic transformations within the life-cycles of the poor themselves. Despite the absence here of a study devoted primarily to land and kinship in the early Tudor period, the book does much to reinforce the recent tendency to break down the traditional medieval–modern divide in thinking about the major problems of this country's social and economic history. Dennis Mills, for example, finds it possible to explain the survival of peasant independence in the village of Melbourn within nineteenth-century Cambridgeshire "monopoly capitalism" partly in terms of a long tradition already discernible in the subsidy rolls and poll-tax returns of the fourteenth century. More challenging still is Smith's own reminder of the probable "depth of a strong collectivist tradition" in English rural society, which was certainly not likely to have been new-born in the Tudor period. It is indeed one of the more interesting ironies of the volume as a whole that most of its contributors stress the significance of external governmental and seigneurial intervention in shaping the social and family structure of the pre-industrial English village despite the fact that such intervention is usually highly resistant to the quantitative procedures to which the authors are in general so absolutely committed.

These and a host of other issues are discussed with exceptional care and insight in the first and longest essay in *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, Smith's wide-ranging consideration of "Some issues concerning families and their property in rural England 1250–1800". Likely to be read and pondered more assiduously than any other chapter in the book, this is substantially more than the conventional editorial introduction to a volume of collected papers. It advances the general, and negative, proposition that the transmission of property either at death or marriage was not necessarily the single most important determinant of the rural family's developmental cycle and is a major contribution to a fundamental debate. For those historians with a greater interest in the particular, and who lack his own powers of numerical and theoretical analysis, Smith's essay must still be required reading for its penetrating comments on almost all the substantive secondary literature to have appeared in recent years relating to the medieval family's land and inheritance patterns. Particularly notable too is Smith's ability to draw attention to important matters, like the coexistence within the village community of "living-in" servants and labourers, which have not received the attention they deserve.

Smith's disinclination to over-emphasize a class-based explanation for social change at the rural level is shared by many of his fellow authors. In a very clear review of the probabilities, Bruce Campbell, for example, supports the not unfamiliar idea that a "demographic lurch" in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries may best explain developments of the land-market at the small but exceptionally well-documented manor of Coltishall, north of Norwich, and Jack Ravensdale takes a similar approach to the transfer of customary land in the Cambridgeshire manor of Cottenham at approximately the same period. Ian Blanchard casts a wider net by comparing the impact of industrial employment in areas of Derbyshire and the Mendips to promote a cogent thesis that there was "a major metamorphosis" within the village community between 1380 and 1520. C. Dyer's two contributions to this volume not only document the accumulation of multiple holdings in the west Midlands villages whose history he has already illuminated so well but also defend (against the strictures of Zvi Razi) the traditional view that the relationship between family and land was severely disrupted in the decades after the Black Death. Convincing though his defence is, Dr Razi, who has more references to his name in the index of this volume than any other historian, brings off a particularly important methodological surprise by revealing how unreliable surnames recorded in court rolls can be as a basis for unearthing kin relationships.

By contrast Keith Wrightson's analysis of the testators of Terling in Essex between 1550 and 1700 seems to prove that "good neighbourliness" (another largely unquantifiable commodity) was more influential than extended kin-connection in cementing social relationships within at least one English village. Nor does Alan Macfarlane, in a stimulating essay which was presumably written before the appearance of his more polemical *The Origins of English Individualism*, have any particular difficulty in exposing "the myth of the peasantry" at Kirby Lonsdale. In their different ways the closely argued essays of Wales, Newman-Brown and Richard Wall also throw important new light on the interaction of property, marriage and poor relief in various villages in southern England. A final word of praise ought to go to B. W. Holderness's admittedly less than comprehensive survey of the economic activities of widows in pre-industrial society. With its enjoyable demonstration that money-lending was "the most prominent economic function of the widow in English rural society between 1500 and 1900", this is a particularly attractive piece of revisionism within a largely revisionist book.

Dr Smith is right to suppose that so deeply considered a collection of essays, not least his own, will stimulate ever-widening debate on the major issues it so clearly shows to be even more labyrinthine than we already know.

Conflicts unmasked

J. F. C. Harrison

ALUN HOWKINS
Poor Labouring Men: Rural radicalism in Norfolk 1870–1923
225pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.95.
0 7102 0295 4

For many years I have had on my shelves a small book with the intriguing title, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster*. Printed on thick paper and published by the Labour Publishing Company in 1922, it is the autobiography of George Edwards, whose frail features, framed by small gold-rimmed glasses and winged collar, look out sadly from the frontispiece. He was, says Alun Howkins in his fine study of agricultural unionism, "the embodiment of Norfolk radicalism" and a man to whom every English farmworker owes a debt, though his reputation has to some extent been overshadowed by that of Joseph Arch.

It is indicative of the changes in labour historiography that had Howkins's study been written twenty years ago it would have had a different title and emphasis – perhaps "A History of the Agricultural Labourers' Union" rather than "Rural Radicalism". Howkins demonstrates that the history of the labourers' movement has to be examined in its local context as well as being part of Arch's National Agricultural Labourers' Union begun in 1872. Moreover, unlike earlier histories, *Poor Labouring Men* reaches beyond the confines of institutional history and does full justice to cultural and social phenomena. In particular there are two valuable preliminary chapters, one on structural conflict and the other on the chapel.

Howkins shows clearly how conflict was endemic in farm work. Beneath a façade of deference and "stable" work relationships, antagonism was built into the system. Apart from personal difficulties arising out of the close master-and-man nexus, there was more serious conflict, which sprang from the seasonal nature of the work and from the way in which the farm functioned. During the winter months, when there was a labour surplus, farmers reduced wages and laid off workers. But in the summer, when labour was often in short supply, the labourer was in a more favourable position. At the crucial points of change, whether for reduction or increase of wages, resistance and bargaining took place, the men being represented by the head team-man and the "lord" or head-labourer. This process, which formed the basis of union activity later, is beautifully illustrated by extracts from interviews with old farmworkers and others.

The second element in the formation of rural radicalism was the chapel. It is symbolic that both George Edwards and Joseph Arch were Primitive Methodist local preachers, and that the favourite texts of early Norfolk radicals were revivalist hymns like "Hold the Fort". The spirit of rural labouring men when they began their struggle in the 1870s was expressed through popular nonconformity:

> Dare to be a Daniel,
> Dare to stand alone,
> Dare to have a purpose true,
> Dare to make it known.

The wayside Bethel provided an alternative culture for Norfolk labourers. It gave them a model for the organization of their trade unions, training in public speaking, and leaders who were respectable and self-improving. It is no wonder that the spread of unionism, when it began in 1872, was likened to a religious revival.

The core of *Poor Labouring Men* is the history of the union from 1872 to 1923. It is a story of uphill struggle, with a few spectacular gains and more bitter defeats. Local strikes and lock-outs are highlighted against a backdrop of the day-to-day running of the union. Yet the greatest achievement was the setting up of an agricultural Wages Board in 1917, which did for the labourer what fifty years of trade-union agitation had failed to do, namely, guarantee him a national minimum wage and a fixed working week. For Norfolk workers (though not for some other agricultural areas, where wages were higher than the national minimum) this was a minor triumph. The abandonment of the scheme in 1921 was condemned by Edwards as the great betrayal of the agricultural industry.

Unlike in 1914, the linkage between chapel, union and Liberal Party was preserved in Norfolk; but thereafter the swing towards the Labour Party grew strongly. In 1918 Edwards formally severed his connection with Liberalism, and in 1920 he was returned as Labour candidate at a by-election in South Norfolk. This and many other themes are ably examined by Howkins. His introductory hope that through his book the voice of the labourer might be heard is amply fulfilled. And as a bonus we have an excellent series of plates from material in the Norfolk Rural Life Museum.

"Living social history of the British Isles", the subtitle to *Close to the Earth* by Judith Cook (195pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £9.95. 0 7100 9634 8), suggests a comprehensive survey by an anthropologist, but this is in fact a journalist's collection of conversations with elderly men and women about the working and living conditions of their childhood. Two diaries are quoted, one written by a Cornish engine-driver in the tin mines between 1871 and 1908, full of details and local words about mining and farming, the other by a Warwickshire miner, describing the pit disaster of 1882, which is still remembered a hundred years later. All the other records depend on verbal reports and memories.

The conversations are classified by occupations, with short introductions about each industry. Part One deals with stone masons in Dyfed, tin-miners in Cornwall, coal-miners in north Warwickshire and slate-miners in North Wales; Part Two with fishermen from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, West Wales and East Anglia; Part Three with farmers and villagers in north Warwickshire, Norfolk, the Cotswolds and Dartmoor, ending with brewing in a London "village".

Margaret Campbell

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Constituting a challenge

J. B. Paul

ROGER B. JOYCE
Samuel Walker Griffith
456pp. University of Queensland Press. $A 40.
0 7022 1688 7

The need for a full study of Sir Samuel Griffith, one of Australia's "founding fathers", has long been recognized, and this book by Roger B. Joyce at last fills the gap. The late Professor Joyce first, as he puts it, "tasted the richness of the papers of Samuel Walker Griffith" when writing the biography of one of Griffith's closest friends, Sir William MacGregor. The two men came to know each other when MacGregor's distinguished career in medical and colonial administration brought him to British New Guinea as Administrator from 1888 until 1898; Griffith was Premier of Queensland from 1883 until 1888 and again from 1891 until his appointment in 1893 as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland. Their friendship was renewed when MacGregor served as Governor of Queensland from 1909 until 1914 and Griffith was the first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.

Although not present at the 1897–8 Convention, Griffith contributed decisively to the influential first draft of the Australian Constitution at the 1891 Convention. Sir Owen Dixon, Australia's greatest jurist and sixth Chief Justice, claimed that Griffith and A. Inglis Clark of Tasmania were "the two dominant legal figures in that [Convention] and the Constitution owes its shape more to them . . . than to anybody".

Griffith was born in 1845 at Merthyr Tydfil, the son of a Congregationalist minister who emigrated with his family to Australia in 1853. After graduating from the University of Sydney, he studied for the Queensland Bar, and when only thirty-one became Attorney-General. He established a busy private practice, which he ran in tandem with his liberal politics, even when Premier, and represented many clients to whose political interests he was unsympathetic.

Griffith, as Joyce brings out, delighted in his honours (KCMG, 1886; GCMG, 1893) and was fastidious in the correct wearing of their insignia, as photographs in this book confirm. He felt similarly about his elevation to the Privy Council in January 1901 (although he was consistently unimpressed by the calibre of its Judicial Committee, on which he sat for twenty-six days in 1913, and was keen to see Australian appeals limited).

The Chief Justiceship of Queensland carried generous salary and pension rights, but in 1903 Griffith accepted the Chief Justiceship of the newly constituted High Court with a lower salary and no pension. His colleagues as foundation members of the court were Sir Edmund Barton, who had relinquished the premiership on medical advice, and Richard O'Connor. Joyce's account shows that, although Griffith lacked the geniality of his puisne justices, this early court was internally harmonious; its standing vis-à-vis the Privy Council, however, was for a time ambiguous, and the Victorian Supreme Court especially was less than accommodating in appellate matters. Good relations with the Commonwealth Government were disrupted when Sir Josiah Symon, the Attorney-General in the Reid–McLean Ministry (August 1904–July 1905), harried its judges over travelling expenses and facilities in their circuits to the State capitals; the Court's requirements were conceded, and concord was restored only at the start of Deakin's second term. It was on such circuits that Griffith found solace in making a pedantic translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which was later published with disappointing returns; he had formed a passion for the culture of Italy during his first visit on a travelling fellowship after his graduation from Sydney. Someone remarked that he must have translated the *Inferno* in Brisbane, the *Purgatorio* in Melbourne and the *Paradiso* in Sydney.

With the appointment to the Court in 1906 of Isaac Isaacs (a future Chief Justice and Governor-General) and H. B. Higgins, its smooth working was upset. These new appointments had also been founding fathers but were in a minority at the 1897–8 Convention. They dissented from the doctrines of "implied prohibitions" and "immunity of instrumentalities" which the foundation members had adapted from American Supreme Court decisions in the interests of balancing and even protecting the interests of the States against those of the Commonwealth. The dissentients found support, to the chagrin of Griffith and Inglis Clark, in Lord Halsbury's judgment in the Privy Council decision in *Webb v Outtrim* (1906) on a direct appeal from the Victorian Supreme Court. This decision the High Court majority repudiated in *Baxter v Commissioner of Taxation* (1907).

With the death of O'Connor in 1912 and the enlargement of the Court to seven in 1913, the doctrines espoused by Griffith came under threat. But it was not until 1920, three weeks after Griffith's own death on August 9, that, in the *Engineers Case*, the Court (with one dissentient voice) reversed the central part of Griffith's constitutional interpretation as Chief Justice. Sir Isaac Isaacs, who wrote the majority judgment, held that the doctrine of immunity of instrumentalities had led to "divergencies and inconsistencies more and more pronounced as the decisions accumulate", while experience of implied prohibitions had proved the "elusiveness and the inaccuracy of the doctrine as a legal standard".

The tensions of the Court undoubtedly undermined Griffith's health, but one consolation was his friendship with Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson (later Viscount Novar), Governor-General from 1914 until 1920, whose diary entry for Christmas Day 1917 includes this: "I wish Sir S[amuel] G[riffith] could have Peerage and Pension. He merits both if ever a man did." In the event Griffith obtained the latter, enabling him to retire; in Joyce's words his "decline in health by 1918 had become a matter of national concern". The long shadow of Sir John Kerr's dismissal in 1975 of the Whitlam Government (and his prior consultation with Sir Garfield Barwick) has perhaps fallen across Joyce's path when he seeks to disparage Griffith's numerous dealings with the early Governors-General.

Among Griffith's monuments are the standing of the High Court (though not the mode of constitutional interpretation ultimately prevailing thereon), the Constitution itself, the text of which the Australian electorate has been loath to amend, and the Queensland Criminal Code, which he drafted while that colony's Chief Justice.

Professor Joyce's sudden death last year was a considerable loss to Australian scholarship. Sadly, it also meant that he was denied the praise he deserved for this impressive book.

Towards unselfishness

Michael Crowder

STEPHEN CONSTANTINE
The Making of British Colonial Development Policy 1914–1940
326pp. Cass. £19.50.
0 7146 3204 X

Before 1940 Britain's expenditure on development in her huge colonial empire formed an insignificant item in her budget. Aid given and loans granted to colonial territories were designed to make them financially self-sufficient or to bring direct benefits to the domestic British economy. Almost no funds at all were made available for the improvement of the welfare of the inhabitants of the Empire, who in many ways were worse off in the 1930s than they had been in the 1920s.

On May 2, 1940, the British Parliament took time off from the dire situation that had developed in the war with Germany to pass the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, which the historian of imperialism and the British Labour movement, P. S. Gupta, described as "perhaps the first unselfish act in British history". Stephen Constantine, in this admirable history of British colonial development policy between the two world wars, provides not only a perceptive account of why this change-over in Britain's attitude towards aid occurred at a time when the imperial coffers were all but empty, but also a fascinating study of the obstacles that had to be overcome by those who believed both that Britain had a responsibility to improve the living standards of her colonial peoples and that the principal aim of imperial rule should not just be to secure economic advantage for the metropolis.

Until the mid-1930s those who saw the Empire, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*, "as an estate to be exploited for the benefit of the British taxpayer" held sway in the councils of the government. As far as possible, colonies should finance their own development, and where loans were sanctioned by the Imperial Treasury it was on the grounds that they would be directly beneficial to Britain. Indeed all successful arguments for development assistance to the colonies had that benefit as their basic premiss: thus the Trade Facilities Acts of 1921–4 were justified on the grounds that they would help cure British unemployment. Similarly, under the Colonial Development Act of 1929 Britain would advance funds for development of agriculture and industry in the colonial empire "thereby promoting commerce and industry in the United Kingdom". Though this Act did not mark a major departure in British development policy, it did, as Dr Constantine shows, have two very significant features. First, it abandoned the *ad hoc* approach to colonial development problems that had hitherto predominated; second, it was made available to the colonies as a whole, rather than on the bilateral basis that had characterized most earlier development agreements. It did not, however, produce an overall plan for development of the Empire, and relied on individual colonial territories to submit plans for approval by the Colonial Development Advisory Committee. It explicitly excluded educational development.

In the 1930s the upper hand was gained by those who, like Lord de la Warr, Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Office, believed that "the time had come when we should consider the widening of an interpretation of the word 'Development' in the Colonial Development Act" and that one of its objectives should be the improvement of "human capital". The hero of the struggle with the parsimonious Treasury and economically conservative politicians was Malcolm MacDonald, who returned to the Colonial Office as Secretary of State in May 1938. Constantine provides a particularly stimulating account of how he won his victory, by equal skill in economic, humanitarian and political arguments and by securing the commitment of the Colonial Office. He was able to convince sceptics of both parties that the riots and strikes in such varied parts of the Empire as Trinidad, Northern Rhodesia and Palestine were in large measure the result of economic distress and that the country's enemies would thereby be able to turn Britain's neglect of her Empire to effective propaganda. This certainly applied to the West Indies, as the Cabinet admitted when it refused to release the complete report of the West Indies Commission as "too damning an indictment of British rule to be published in full in war-time". A firm commitment by the Imperial Government to finance social as well as economic improvements in the colonies would help allay criticisms by both enemies and potential allies like the Americans. It would also help avert any possibility of Britain's colonies being placed under international supervision after the war. Furthermore, MacDonald argued, Britain could ill afford to release troops in wartime to quell colonial disturbances.

Such arguments overcame opposition in the Treasury, and as a result, in 1940, Britain embarked on a new phase in her colonial policy, making welfare a major aim of development aid. The novelty of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, as Constantine insists, was that it no longer had metropolitan gains as a priority. It saw social progress as inseparable from material progress, and made it clear that the British taxpayers and their governments had a duty "to promote the prosperity and happiness of the peoples of the Colonial Empire".

Far right in the Deep North

Michael Davie

HUGH LUNN
Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: A political biography
384pp. University of Queensland Press. £17.50.
0 7022 18154

Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen is one of the strangest politicians in the Western world. Aged seventy-four, handsome and fit and a qualified pilot who still flies the official aeroplanes he has bought with taxpayers' money, he has been Premier of Queensland for seventeen years, showing no sign of retirement or of electoral vulnerability. His name (he recommended himself for the knighthood) is Danish, and his father was a Lutheran pastor.

He is in favour of the Queen, deep breathing as a passport to health, foreign multinationals, small farmers, Victorian virtues and a large and well-paid police force. He is against liberalism in any form, strikes, homosexuals, death duties, female impersonators, conservationists, "bleeding hearts" who complain that Queensland maltreats its Aborigines, street demonstrations and interfering clergymen – among whom he surely now includes the Archbishop of Canterbury, who on a recent visit to Queensland offered a few anodyne remarks in favour of the right to strike. Bjelke-Petersen – "Joh" – has also been strongly opposed to the last three Australian Prime Ministers: Labor's Gough Whitlam, who called him a "Bible-bashing bastard"; the Conservative Malcolm Fraser, whose policies were described by Bjelke-Petersen as "socialist"; and of course the present Prime Minister, Labor's Bob Hawke, who seeks a national "consensus" which Bjelke-Petersen sees as the first step on the road to Communism.

When New Zealand quarrelled with the United States about nuclear weapons, Bjelke-Petersen blockaded New Zealand beer and chocolate in Brisbane harbour. Since Federation at the turn of the century, Queensland had regarded itself as only tenuously linked to the rest of Australia; and Bjelke-Petersen would, if he could, declare Queensland independent. In his speeches he points to the wealth that Queensland brings to the rest of Australia, whereas the rest of Australia brings to Queensland, in his view, only trouble, such as federal laws preventing him from turning over parts of the Great Barrier Reef to international companies so that they can drill it for oil. He is often compared to the old-style governors of the American South, and Australians sometimes call Queensland the Deep North. Indeed, he has developed populist skills that would have won the respect of the Long family of Louisiana.

Hugh Lunn, the author of this updated and detached biography, which was first published in 1978, is an experienced political reporter who works for the *Australian* in Brisbane. He knows Bjelke-Petersen as well as anyone does, and he knows the State, which enables him to explain how their eccentricities complement each other. Bjelke-Peterson started his career as a peanut farmer, hiring the biggest available bulldozers to clear the scrub. He has used the same methods ever since. Who else could have got his wife elected to the Australian Senate almost solely on her reputation for making blueberry muffins?

University of Queensland Press have recently published, each in a cased edition at £24.95 with a paperback at £9.95, *The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine 1914–1918* by H. S. Gullett (844pp. 0 7022 1725 5) and *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918* by F. M. Cutlack (493pp. 0 7022 1727 1). There are Volume Seven (with a new introduction by A. J. Hill) and Eight (introduction by George Odgers) of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, in the reprint series edited and with new prefaces by Robert O'Neill. Volume Seven is a facsimile of the Angus and Robertson 1944 edition and Volume Eight of the 1940 edition.

Who counted in the counting-house

David Parker

DANIEL DESSERT
Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle
824pp. Paris: Fayard. 170 fr.
221301485 X
ROLAND E. MOUSNIER
The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598–1789
Volume II, The Organs of State and Society
Translated by Arthur Goldhammer
695pp. University of Chicago Press. £46.75.
0 226 54328 5

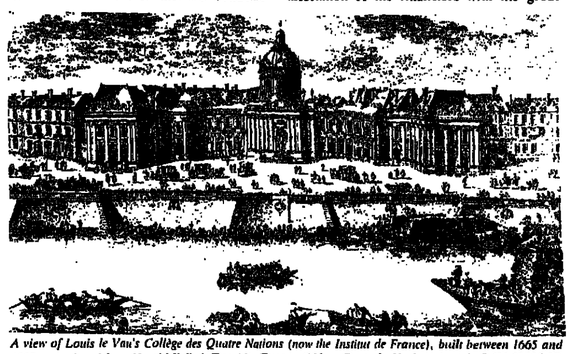
Daniel Dessert's monograph *Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle* is probably the most significant contribution to our understanding of the structure and working of the State in absolutist France to appear since Roland Mousnier's *La Vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* was published in 1946. Ironically, it will almost certainly hasten the demise of the concepts elaborated by Mousnier since then, which find their most recent, albeit not their most convincing, expression in this new translation of his study of the institutions of the *ancien régime*.

One of the many virtues of Mousnier's now classic study of the sale of office was the light it shed on the interaction of money, politics and the social structure. In later works, however, he adopted a very different approach, in which matters economic were largely eclipsed by a preoccupation with the notion that the Old Order was composed not of classes but of status groups. The hierarchy of Orders was determined neither by the distribution of wealth nor by relationship to the means of production but by the prevalent values of French society. Pride of place was thus accorded to those who fulfilled a military role and then to those who served them. Inasmuch as Mousnier and his collaborators continued to display an interest in patterns of wealth it was solely to demonstrate that what counted was not the production of wealth but its nature. At its worst this approach leads to the simplistic idea that people only possessed land for the prestige that such ownership conferred. Undoubtedly the determination of the Mousnier "school" to examine and categorize every social group and corps – ranging from the dukes and peers to provincial office-holders – has immensely enlarged our knowledge of them all; but almost certainly at the expense of obscuring the dynamics of the *ancien régime* behind a series of rather static sociological *tableaux*.

However, Dessert's work brings with it a refreshing change of emphasis which will certainly be appreciated by English-speaking scholars, who have not entirely welcomed Mousnier's extraordinarily pervasive influence on French historiography. Indeed, Dessert writes as though the idea of a Society of Orders has never existed. Totally unhindered by any attachment to the belief that the financiers of the seventeenth century must be located within such a framework, the author dismisses from the outset the need for a conventional presentation of their wealth, family connections and cultural formation. In order really to grasp the genesis and consequences of the financiers' wealth something else is required: an analysis of the mechanisms by which credit was created, state revenues assured, and through which may be discerned the relationships between the world of the financiers, those who wielded power and the socio-economic structures of the *ancien régime*.

Dessert's starting-point is the truism that the escalating costs of its interminable wars left the Crown perpetually in debt. Yet even this observation is infused with a fresh significance as he brings into focus the implications of such a state of affairs in a realm where silver and gold specie constituted the only reliable and accepted form of money. Such paper transactions as royal officials did employ were merely designed to avoid the hazards of transporting cartloads of coinage around the country. Still all required payment in cash and without delay.

Consequently the government was obliged to negotiate with those who could satisfy this demand. Most conspicuous were the hated *financiers* and *traitants*, who in return for cash advances secured the income from a bewildering multitude of taxes and fiscal devices dreamt up by those whose greed was matched only by their imagination. Then there were the tax-farmers to whom the indirect taxes (*gabelles*, *aides*, *domaines*, customs) had long been leased out and who invariably acted in consortia. In all this there is little that is now unfamiliar, but once again Dessert imposes his own perspective, bringing out with striking clarity the fact that the Crown's own paid officials responsible for the levying of the direct taxes (essentially the *taille*) actually came to occupy a relationship to the government little different from that of the private financiers. Above all, this was true of the receivers-general, who headed the twenty or so *généralités* of the realm. For like the private money-lenders they agreed, by signed contract, to pay the Crown a series of lump sums in anticipation of taxes not yet raised, being allocated in return a percentage of the revenue to meet their costs; and like those of the tax-farmers the affairs of the receivers were frequently managed by an association of individuals willing to share the risks and take the profits; and, as did the private financiers, so also the receivers-general sublet the administration of specific revenues in specific localities. There is no justification, concludes Dessert, for the commonly made distinction between the financial officers of the Crown and the private contractors.



A view of Louis le Vau's Collège des Quatre Nations (now the Institut de France), built between 1665 and 1668; reproduced from Harald Keller's Das Alte Europa *(286pp. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 3 421 02586 X).*

Taking the receivers-general, the farmers-general and the most active *traitants*, Dessert establishes a corpus of 534 financiers for the reign of Louis XIV – for all of whom he provides short biographies in a most impressive appendix – who constitute the basis for the further development of his argument. Bringing into play a vast range of archival material – State papers, public and private financial records, genealogical documents, marriage contracts – Dessert proceeds to demonstrate that not only did the financiers profit by lending to the State but also that in a real sense they *were* the State. Emanating from well-connected families with a record of service in the financial and judicial administration, they were themselves in a large majority of cases holders of office under the Crown.

As the analysis unfolds it also becomes apparent that the widespread depiction of the financiers as self-made men of lowly, if not base origins, who had insinuated themselves into high society by nefarious means, is totally at variance with the reality. On the contrary, the essential prerequisite for embarking on a financial career was a network of family connections and contacts among the well-to-do, and the financial wherewithal to exploit them. In fact the financiers examined by Dessert normally brought with them substantial sums which, matched by their brides' dowries, allowed them to compete with, and ascend to, the ranks of the upper Robe. Just under a third of the financiers possessed inherited titles of nobility and, in all, 79 per cent achieved that status ultimately. Only a tiny minority of them graduated from the ranks of the merchants and bankers, and even in these cases one is dealing with the *bonne bourgeoisie*.

Dessert's acute perception of the contradiction between the reality and the myth of the *laquais-financier*, so assiduously propagated by the upper classes themselves, facilitates an even greater penetration of the murky recesses which lay behind the snobbish façade of ancien régime society. As he probes away it becomes increasingly apparent that the financiers with whom he is concerned operated in large part as intermediaries for people with money to lend but reputations to preserve. Underpinning the activity of the financiers but concealed by the employment of so many "straw men" and quasi-legal manoeuvres, lay the desire of the rich to become even richer. A list of those with an interest in the royal finances is a roll-call of the cream of French society: Sully, Seguier, Richelieu, Mazarin, Condé, La Tremoille, Bullion, Montpensier, La Rochefoucauld, the Archbishop of Avranches, the Bishop of Toulon and so on. Of fifty-two investors in the salt-tax farms between 1655 and 1663, twelve were nobles of the Sword, eighteen of the Robe, four held financial office, while five were *secrétaires du Roi*. The association of the financiers with the great families of the land is also underlined by their frequent employment as private intendants, administrators and receivers.

Occasionally, the government, faced with declining supplies of bullion or unable to issue any more assignments on the treasury without undermining confidence in them, turned on its creditors and compelled them to disgorge part of their profits. Nearly a fifth of Dessert's money-lenders were ruined or nearly so, in many cases at the hands of the Crown. Yet the evident "monopolization of the royal finances by the ruling class" greatly restricted the government's freedom of manoeuvre. Thus even the most famous of the *chambres de justice* of 1661 and 1716 failed to do more than bring momentary relief to the treasury. Not only were many of the fines imposed on financiers subsequently moderated or not collected, but their collection was actually farmed out to those who remained in favour. The principal consequence of the investigations of 1661–5 was merely the substitution of the clientele of financiers associated with the *surintendant* Fouquet by those in whom his implacable rival and successor, Colbert, placed his trust. Behind the proceedings of the *chambre de justice* there thus raged a bitter conflict for domination of the fiscal system which, however much it damaged and terrorized certain individuals, did nothing to change the system itself.

At this juncture, however, Dessert has a much more unexpected point to make about the persecution of Foucquet by Colbert: this he presents not just as a manifestation of antagonisms between clans of financiers but as a conscious attempt to hide the truth about the colossal fortune left by Cardinal Mazarin, the King's chief minister whom Colbert had served as private intendant. Mazarin had indeed given specific instructions that no inventory was to be made of his possessions, whose value equalled the reserves of the Bank of Amsterdam, on the grounds that to do so would not be in the interests of the State. How right he was. Dessert's examination of the minister's wealth makes it clear how much he had benefited from high office; and publication of the accounts which rested in Colbert's hands would certainly have made plain to all how those in power "enriched themselves at the expense of the people and the State". The subsequent legal attack on Foucquet, whose assets were only a third of the Cardinal's, was, concludes Dessert, nothing more than "a screen which masked the profound reality of the *ancien régime* where the ruling classes, as much a political as an economic élite, concentrated both power and money in their own hands, exploiting for their own profit the wealth of the realm".

Dessert's method is thus finally vindicated by a triumphant demonstration of the fusion of power, wealth and status that lay behind the social posturing and legal distinctions of the hierarchy of Estates and Orders. He penetrates the heart of the *ancien régime* in a fashion which is precluded as far as Mousnier is concerned by his own too ready acceptance of upper-class ideology and by his legal positivism. Although, in passing, Mousnier acknowledges that money was beginning to undermine old values and that contemporary pamphlets exaggerated the lowly origins of the financiers, his conceptual framework prohibits a recognition of their true role. Moreover, his emphasis on the antagonism between *commissaires* – the salaried agents of the Crown – and the venal office-holders as a principal motor of change must now seem less convincing than ever. Most clearly of all, Mousnier's insistence on the separation of wealth and status is shown to be misconceived. For Dessert establishes quite conclusively that there did exist a class of high status which ruled by virtue of a monopoly of both wealth and power. It also did its utmost to conceal this fact: so much for Mousnier's belief that class and class-consciousness were absent from pre-industrial society.

By the time that one reaches the last chapter of Dessert's monograph these conclusions seem inescapable. Yet the author himself does not bring them together in this way, choosing, in the course of the conclusion, to locate the root cause of the State's problems rather more in the total dependence on gold and silver than in the nature of the class structure. This could be treated as merely a curious emphasis were it not for the fact that Dessert then proceeds to make the astounding suggestion that France's dependence on bullion flowed from a healthy balance of trade and that this shows how wrong it is to assume that her economy was backward in comparison to those of Holland and England.

Not only is the logic of such an argument rendered suspect by Dessert's own observation that merchant communities were less preoccupied with the accumulation of specie and better able to utilize paper money than others (certainly true of both the Dutch and the English in the later seventeenth century) but it runs counter to the whole thrust of his analysis. What he has actually described is a financial system of an archaic and inadequate character which surely both reflected and accentuated the gulf separating France from her northern rivals. It was a system which generated neither confidence nor investment. When paper transactions became more widespread during the later years of Louis XIV it was in order to compensate for the lack of bullion, and the main consequence was to promote both inflation and anxiety. Only one or two of the financiers displayed entrepreneurial interests or abilities and by and large the concentration of wealth in such hands was not helpful. The dependence of the trading companies on the huge but fragile funds of the money-lenders was not a good thing and the same could be said of other sectors of the economy. Not only does Dessert himself point all this out but he is extremely doubtful if Colbert had the capacity to effect economic change precisely because of his *partisan* background and mentality. All of which seems to confirm rather than undermine the notion of French economic backwardness. Moreover, on the evidence produced, it is difficult to avoid concluding that the class structure was the prime obstacle to any reform which might have remedied matters.

It is a pity that Dessert's analysis does not close on a more convincing note; for this is a truly original study taking its impetus from a determination to ask fundamental questions rather than simply accumulate data. In his 400 pages of text he tackles more relevant and interesting issues than most who insist on writing at twice that length. The end result constitutes a major historiographical landmark by virtue of both the methodology employed and its brilliant illumination of seventeenth-century realities.

Of a mirthful mind

Vincent Crapanzano

MAHADEV L. APTE
Humor and Laughter: An anthropological approach
317pp. Cornell University Press. $35.75 (paperback, $16.45).

Humor and Laughter is the first major attempt, at least in the English-speaking world, to view humour and laughter cross-culturally. Mahadev Apte, an anthropologist at Duke University, has produced a compendium of considerable bibliographic value. His study belongs to that peculiarly American genre of comparativism that hides its Frazerian inspiration behind a wall of often trivial hypotheses and scientific-sounding propositions. ("Ethnic humor is less likely to occur in highly homogeneous, small-scale societies than in heterogeneous, large-scale, and complex ones.") And, as in many such studies, Apte often confuses ethnographic description and ethnological commentary. He begins his survey with the joking relationship, those institutionalized relations, as A. R. Radcliffe-Brown put it, "between two persons in which one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other who in turn is required to take no offense", and goes on to discuss a number of subjects ranging from sexual inequality in humour, children's humour through to humour and women and humour and ethnicity. Apte concludes with a report on evolutionary and biosocial studies of laughter and smiling. Laughter and smiling, we learn, evolved from primate teeth-baring displays, which were associated at first with a hostile and defensive posture and later with a non-hostile and submissive one. Smiling appears to be "innate, involuntary, and occurs in infants right from birth" while laughter results from human socialization. Whatever their origins, the occurrence of both smiling and laughter is soon determined by social and cultural factors.

Apte's approach to humour is eclectic. He positions himself in a non-committal sort of way in the ever-shifting, contradictory "centre" of contemporary American anthropological thought. He argues from a cognitive perspective that "humour is a culturally shaped individual cognitive experience" and, from a social functionalist perspective, that it is a social phenomenon that serves both "as a lubricant to smooth social interactions and as a means of expressing hostility and aggression". He also entertains, at times from some distance, other approaches: Freudian, ethnosemantic, sociobiological, behaviourist and symbolic-anthropological. As he has no consistent theory of culture and its relationship to humour and laughter, he is driven at times to such absurd statements as:

> Nevertheless, not all humor is socioculturally relevant, and it should not be expected always to be so. At the personal cognitive level, humor may be sporadic and may lack the context of social interaction. For an individual, it may be an "act of creation", full of fantasy, aesthetically pleasing, intellectually stimulating and uniquely personal. It needs no sociocultural explanation or justification.

Such humour (were it possible) would have to be that of an autistic *enfant sauvage*. How would any humour, personal or institutionalized, be possible in a socio-cultural void? Humour occurs in an interpreted world. Apte himself acknowledges this in his definition of humour as "a cognitive, often unconscious experience involving internal redefining of sociocultural reality and resulting in a mirthful state of mind".

Humour varies greatly across cultures. Obscene, scatological clowning occurs in the most sacred rites of the Pueblo peoples. Its occurrence elsewhere would produce horror. Kwoma boys, in New Guinea, simulate copulation hilariously without eliciting adult disapproval. Trickster figures like Coyote among the Plains Indians, the Hindu god Indra, and the African Spider combine in their picaresque adventures features of both the culture hero and the culture dolt. Frequently, they lack a sense of bodily unity; they talk to their own organs, punish them, try to eat them, and are even duped by them. Elsewhere culture heroes are distinct from dolts; they are solemn, infallible and otiose. Despite all the variation in humour, Apte finds certain cross-cultural consistencies. It is, for example, generally considered inappropriate for women to engage in humour, especially slapstick, in public. Humour tends to be expressed in casual rather than formal styles of speech. A relatively high incidence of scatological and sexual humour among children in a culture correlates with strict, repressive attitudes toward sex and bodily waste. Excessive generalization is characteristic of ethnic humour; intracultural variation is ignored. (Apte himself engages in something similar when he talks about "women" and "children" who have as little depth for him as the stereotypic figures do in an ethnic joke.) Such generalities are trivial and give us little insight into humour and its expression.

The superficiality of Apte's conclusions has less to do with the paucity of data than with his approach. To isolate humour from the rich, multi-dimensional contexts of its occurrence, as Apte does, is to render any but the most superficial analysis impossible. However we define the humorous, its context is always more than a simple, cognitive picture – a container – in which an incongruence, an exaggeration, a bit of grotesque behaviour or the display of the anti-natural takes place. Context is always a site of transformation, and it is precisely the joke, the pun, the caricature, the prank, the clowning or the hoax that brings about the transformation, whether in a conventional or a novel fashion. Humour has, in other words, a rhetorical – an illocutionary – force which places it squarely in the domain of the moral. And it is this moral dimension of humour that is so sadly lacking in Apte's discussion. One wishes that he had thought to look to the writer, the critic and the philosopher who, unlike the contemporary social and psychological scientist, have had much to say about humour and morality.

Female trouble

John Fairleigh

PAT CARLIN (Editor)
Criminal Women: Autobiographical accounts
197pp. Oxford: Polity Press. £16.50 (paperback, £4.95).
0 7456 0087 5

One of the dilemmas which feminists face when exploring the relationship between women and crime is whether to engage in special pleading for women offenders as victims because of their sex, or to aver that women's potential, and therefore culpability, in crime is no less than that of men. Pat Carlin in her introduction to *Criminal Women* argues against a separatist feminist criminology, seeing this as a further reinforcement of society's gender stereotyping. But, together with the four women who in subsequent chapters tell their own stories, she seems intent on drawing attention to some distinctive hardships endured by women and the ways in which these provoked them into rebellion and crime.

In their childhood and adolescence the four protagonists of this book experienced some combination of the deprivations commonly recorded in case histories of people who come to be labelled as criminal: poverty, family disruption, consciousness of low social status and limited opportunity. But more than this they felt pressure to conform to an expectation of them as girls that was oppressive and contrary to their personal inclination. Turning to crime expressed a struggle for liberation and an assertion of sexual equality. As their stories unfold it appears that the women were indeed successful in their chosen professions. For example, Chris Tchaikovsky progressed from adolescent breaking and entering through robbery with menace to a very intricate international credit card fraud which employed a large network of airborne helpers. Jenny Hicks and her partner built up a direct mailing service for advertisers and by adjusting their Post Office franking machine were able to acquire such comforts as a London flat, a house in Brighton and a private plane and a club in Tangiers.

While their careers go well it is difficult for the reader not to feel some admiration for their achievement, which is without doubt evidence of courage to survive. The hazard is that in feeling sympathy for their aspirations for a better life, it is possible to be beguiled into supporting their methods of attaining it. So it is important to note that the often racy narrative of their escapades conceals the plight of many individual as well as corporate victims and, tranquillity of a period of honesty, there is seldom even a passing concern for those who suffered at their hands. Further unbalancing these accounts is the heavy overlay of radical socialism and feminism on the structure of the life stories. Men for the most part are cast as exploiters, oppressors, spongers. And there are many routine references to the evils of capitalism; even "anger that the masses are not revolting". In Diana Christina's story of her dual career as a nurse and a professional shoplifter, the editor Pat Carlin goes so far as to interrupt the narrative with her own political and feminist interpretations and concludes that together they have "been deconstructing Christina's career" and have "tried to present an alternative history".

First-hand accounts of how people are drawn into crime, how treatment affected them and how they can be better helped to turn to non-criminal careers are invaluable to penal policy makers. But if the people telling their own stories have first absorbed dogmatic perspectives and then "deconstructed" their histories to fit them, the insights to be gained from criminal biographies, male or female, are limited. Carlin is fortunate that the women she has chosen have such spirit and character that their accounts of their lives still come across as strongly authentic, despite the polemics that she exacts from them. There is reinforcement, if reinforcement were needed, for the now common wisdom that few adult criminals have been brought up in suburban homes with two parents, good schooling and the chance of conventional status and a job. And there is the perhaps more necessary reminder that women suffer particular kinds of exploitation and discrimination, when they are sentenced they may be subjected to the special horrors of women's prisons recounted by Josie O'Dwyer in her chapter "Surviving Holloway".

All these factors help to explain a criminal past, but perhaps the strongest point that the women make, no less powerful for being implicit, is that ultimately there is greater satisfaction in taking responsibility for the next stage in one's life than in railing against previous misfortune. Each account of the times of anger and personal turmoil, even if triumphalist in the detailing of cleverly designed crime and thwarting of the law, ends in a reassessment. Together with other women formerly involved in crime the four subjects of this book were able to move on to practical action that helped first themselves and then others out of the cycle of crime and self-destruction. Moralists may say that for much of their earlier suffering these "criminal women" must take some of the blame. For the achievement in winning control

Sharp dressing

Stuart Cosgrove

MAURICIO MAZÓN
The Zoot-Suit Riots: The psychology of symbolic annihilation
163pp. Austin: University of Texas Press. $12.95.
0 292 79801 6

The zoot-suit remains a powerful sartorial image of the past. From its background in the underworld of jazz to its real and mythologized associations with the spectacular nightlife of Harlem, hanging from the shoulders of Cab Calloway or worn with the studied cool of Thelonious Monk, the suit was a metaphor for humour and resistance. But Mauricio Mazón in *The Zoot-Suit Riots* bypasses the stylistic history of the suit and its connections with black music and focuses on a specific moment in the social history of fashion: the Los Angeles Riots of 1943.

The zoot-suit riots drew public attention to a significant polarization within wartime society in the United States. Gangs of predominantly black and Mexican youths who were known as *pachucos*, engaged in violent street fighting with white servicemen who had recently been stationed in barracks along the Pacific coastline. On the surface, the polarization was sartorial – zoot-suiters versus uniformed recruits – but the riots were complicated by pride, patriotism, social attitudes to the war-effort and, of course, racism.

With entry into the Second World War in December 1941, the United States was forced to come to terms with conscription and rationing. Among the new regulations were directions from the War Production Board which forbade the manufacture of clothes necessitating excessive quantities of valuable textiles. Although the zoot-suit, with its wide shoulder jacket and pleated trouser, was literally forbidden by law, a network of "bootleg" tailors continued to supply the thousands of *pachuco* youths in east Los Angeles. To the outrage of newly recruited GIs, young Mexican Americans stepped out in what became known as "the killer-diller coat, with the drape shape, enough cuff and shoulders padded like a lunatic's cell". At the height of the zoot-suit riots it became commonplace for US Marines to organize raids on the Mexican-American community. In one incident, a gang of drunken sailors rampaged through a local cinema as a suiters to the front of the auditorium, stripped them before the audience and, as a final insult, urinated on their suits. These events led inevitably to public panic over violent youth cultures, accusations of systematic racism on the part of the military and to strained exchanges between the Mexican government and the US State Department.

As Mazón points out, the zoot-suit riots were an idiosyncratic precedent for the more violent and socially disruptive race riots which flared up in Detroit and Harlem later in the same year. His analysis takes account of the most important issues, the estrangement of Mexican immigrant youths, the influence of irresponsible journalism and the general disintegration of family relationships under war conditions. However, Mazón's main concern – implied in the book's cumbersome subtitle "the psychology of symbolic annihilation" – is to sketch a general psychology of the riots. The outcome is the unsatisfactory and highly questionable conclusion that the riots were "imagined" rather than real, and that they were an opportunity for white soldiers to act out displaced rituals of power and subordination over the zoot-suitors. In order to arrive at this general psychological point, Mazón has to dismiss and suppress a range of more convincing social evidence, which sees the riots as the inevitable outcome of cultural alienation, material poverty and white racism.

Mazón includes useful primary material in the form of contemporary military documents and a fascinating strip-cartoon by the animator Al Capp. But the inclusion of the cartoon "Zoot-Suit Yokum" could have been the basis for a more searching and analytical critique of the popular media and the part played by William Randolph Hearst's newspapers in overstating the zoot-suit threat. None the less, Mazón touches on an important social inheritance: "One of the significant tragedies of the riots was that they, in fact, 'confirmed' the 'criminality' of Mexican-American youth . . . immortalized in the post-war profile of the barrio youth as the quintessential picture of delinquency, marginality and deviance." It is precisely this recognition which ought to have taken Mazón on the logical path through recent theoretical studies of youth subcultures and working-class style, but the book evades an opportunity to undercut the myth of "punk". In Los Angeles in 1943 the zoot-suit riots presented, a very rare moment, where clothes, youth culture and social resistance

Paperbacks

Biography and memoirs

MARGARET DRABBLE. *Arnold Bennett*. 397pp. Penguine £4.95. 0 14 0580107 7. □ The reissue of this portrait, first published in 1974 (and reviewed in the *TLS* of July 12 that year) makes more widely available one of the best literary biographies of recent times. Bennett swiftly rose from the obscurity of the Potteries to attain the kind of celebrity which is nowadays reserved for television personalities: the mere narrative of his exploits compels attention. This book, however, full of careful though unobtrusive research, evokes a complex figure – a man of turbulent energies who was at once the prisoner of the Methodist work-ethic and a liberated lover of Gallic pleasures. Margaret Drabble conducts the reader round the life and work with enviable ease, and her discussion of Bennett's huge fictional output is as sharp as it is enthusiastic. She inspires you to go back to the originals.

STEPHEN KOSS. *Asquith*. 310pp. Hamish Hamilton. £4.95. 0 241 11500 0. □ Stephen Koss's biography of Asquith, first published in 1976, was reviewed in the *TLS* of 27 August that year, when Peter Clarke found that "this new study will offer the most accessible and authoritative introduction to a career of pivotal importance in the evolution of modern British politics". A few additions have been made to the bibliographical notes, but the paperback reprint is essentially the same as the first edition. The qualities which fellow scholars noted in Stephen Koss's work after his sudden and tragically early death last year can all be seen here. *Asquith* displays all Koss's industry in pursuit of documentary sources and his skill in turning archival research into clear narrative, his mastery of political manoeuvre and connoisseurship of political intrigue (which Dr Clarke noted of the hardback edition), and a lucid and incisive prose style which make this important biography a model of its kind.

Botany

A. R. CLAPHAM, T. G. TUTIN and E. F. WARBURG (Editors). *Flora of the British Isles*. Second Edition. 1269pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.95. 0 521 31519 0. □ *Flora of the British Isles*, first published in 1952 (and reviewed in the *TLS* of March 21 that year) was intended to cover the advances that had taken place in botanical knowledge in the previous fifty years. In 1962 a revised edition was published (reviewed in the *TLS* of June 29 that year) recording more progress in the knowledge of plants. It is this edition that has now been reissued in paperback partly in order, as the publisher tells us, to "attract a wider audience of amateur botanists". It is, however, likely to be the more serious amateur who will find the book rewarding, although it does also contain information for everyone. Take, as an example, *Rosa pimpinellifolia*, Burnet Rose; an easily understood description "Low, erect, deciduous shrub spreading by suckers and forming large patches . . ." is followed by a more technical one. The authors start with a synopsis of classification. *Pteridophita*, being the most primitive, are first described; the law of evolution has been considered throughout the plant sequence. There is a comprehensive glossary – essential for the technical details – at the end of the book. There are four volumes of illustrations to the Flora also in paperback and also published by the Cambridge University Press.

Classical studies

M. I. FINLEY. *The Ancient Economy*. 262pp. Hogarth Press, £4.95. 0 70120625 X. □ This new edition of Sir Moses Finley's standard work has a new chapter of "Further thoughts" where the main conclusions of the original book (first published in 1973 and reviewed in the *TLS* of January 25, 1974) are vigorously defended against the attacks of rival scholars. The title of the book will mislead the casual buyer wanting to broaden his knowledge of economics backwards into the ancient world; Sir Moses gives us six essays on contrasting aspects of Greek and Roman society emphasizing the difficulty of imposing modern concepts on the incomplete and ambiguous nature of our knowledge of the ancient world. How frustrating it is that the classical world had the capacity but not the desire to produce statistical data of the sort that illuminate the concepts of modern economics. "To speak of a 'labour market' or a 'money market' is immediately to falsify the situation", says Sir Moses. Anybody interested in the classical world should be stimulated by Sir Moses's thoughtful approach. His work has stopped the fashion for plundering classical writings to support a modern theory of politics or economics.

STEPHEN USHER. *The Historians of Greece and Rome*. 273pp. Bristol Classical Press. £6.95. 0 8061 1938 1. □ It is difficult for classicists who are not professional scholars to read enough of the ancient historians to reach intelligent independent judgments in the supremely abstract but still compelling field of the history of historiography. Stephen Usher's book, though intended for non-linguists, and though itself firmly and refreshingly earth-bound (with scarcely a mention of Momigliano in the bibliography, which has been revised for this reissue) provides a sufficient springboard for many sixth-formers and undergraduates to make that heady leap into the empyrean. As always in such work there is a tendency to treat an individual as no more than a concrete expression of the *zeitgeist* (why, incidentally, does Usher expect his readers to know German?) of his age, so that Herodotus is seen as being imbued with the values of epic and tragedy, Thucydides with those of medicine and sophistry, and so on, but in general (excepting the question of what it signifies to say that Cato or Marius was a plebeian) Usher is informative and reliable. *The Historians of Greece and Rome* was first published in 1969 and reviewed in the *TLS* of July 17 that year.

History

CYRIL JOLY. *Take These Men*. 357pp. Buchan and Enright. £6.50. 0 907675 40 9. □ This semi-fictionalized account of armoured warfare in the Western Desert, as seen from the point of view of a young tank commander, was praised on first publication by the *TLS* reviewer (March 25, 1955) as "a vivid and accurate piece of reporting, which might have been even better in the form of an autobiography". Joly, a Sandhurst-educated regular, saw the campaign through almost from the beginning, from August 1940, until the entry of 7 Armoured Division into Tunis in May 1943. Deliberately, he makes little attempt to offer a strategic dimension, so that the two abortive campaigns that brought British forces control of Cyrenaica, only to find themselves pushed back again to the Egyptian frontier, dissolve into the confusing immediacy of close-up: early skirmishes with the Italians; cavalry-style warfare across miles of desert before the nightly retreat into the quasi-domesticity of the "leaguer" to repair the slow and too-lightly armed British tanks in preparation for the next day's battle; the murderous set-piece confrontations with the German Mark IV tanks. Casualties during the final Battle of El Alamein are calculated, among the troops engaged, to have been proportionately heavier than on the Somme, and it is clear from Joly's account, with its tally of "brewed-up" tanks and of comrades killed and wounded, that the Western Desert could be as lethal as the Western Front. The book lacks the reflectiveness and the stoical bitterness of the classic First World War accounts, and the dialogue that Joly puts into the mouths of his fictionalized fellow-officers and tank-crews is wooden, but the plain style and the piling up of detail give the book its own particular distinction. A map would have helped the reader to see a little beyond the next wadi.

JOACHIM WHALEY (Editor). *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*. 252pp. Europa. £6.50. 0 905118 67 7. □ This valuable collection of essays first appeared in 1981 and brings together eight substantial studies of the subject, ranging from the literary and archaeological evidences of Homeric times to changes wrought in eschatological attitudes in the aftermath of Hiroshima. The editor's introduction to his thanatographic symposium brings together some of the theological, historical and thanatological elements underlying modern work on the history of death; notably in France, but it was composed too early to take due account of John McManners's palmary study of *Death and the Enlightenment* (1981). Professor McManners is, however, one of the contributors (on "Death and the French Historians"). Other papers include Joachim Whaley on the disposal of the dead in seventeenth and eighteenth century Hamburg, P. S. Fritz on English royal funerals from 1500 to 1830, a study of European tombs from 1750 to 1830, and C. A. Bayly on North Indian Hindu ritual since 1600. The concluding essay, the longest in the book, is by David Cannadine, who gives a stimulating account of "War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain", documented from an unusually wide range of sources.

Poetry

DAVID BUCHAN (Editor). *A Book of Scottish Ballads*. 232pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £4.95. 0 7102 0539 2. □ First published in 1973, this collection was intended as a companion to David Buchan's study, *The Ballad and the Folk*, which the *TLS* reviewer (October 27, 1972) praised as "the first to subject Scots oral tradition to scholarly appraisal". The selection of ballads included here was made on correspondingly scholarly grounds. In choosing the texts, Professor Buchan restricted himself to a single region of Scotland, the Northeast, and to three tradition-bearers: Anna Brown, James Nicol and Bell Robertson, representing, respectively, the "oral", "transitional" and "modern" traditions of ballad recording (from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries). In his 1972 study, Buchan discussed the puzzle of oral composition and argued that the quarrel about folk memory or individual authorship was without substance. The argument is summarized in the introduction to this book. The singer creates the tale afresh in singing it, though in doing so is reliant on "the structural and formulaic patternings he inherits from tradition". Before giving his account of "what a ballad is", Buchan proffers a warning: "General readers may prefer at this point to begin browsing in the lusher pastures of 'Gil Brenton'", the first ballad in the book. Once there, however, they will find a text uncompromised by a desire to cater to refined taste. There are no Walter Scotticisms here.

Travel

M. F. K. FISHER. *Two Towns in Provence*. 273 and 208pp. The Hogarth Press. £4.95. 0 7012 0610 1. □ M. F. K. Fisher has her fans (among them the poet Auden, it seems), and it is easy to see why. Words flow from her with an ease which is communicated to her reader, so that paragraphs demand not to be chewed down into their component parts but swallowed whole, like oysters. Any incident or impression can be made the subject of meditation on an almost mystical level, and so generate an anecdote the colour and charm (and indeed the length) of which belies its humdrum origin. There is an element of hit-or-miss in the process, though: sometimes her mysticism degenerates into whimsy, and because she is an instinctive rather than a careful stylist, infelicities (not to mention extraordinary spellings) do sneak in. There are many more hits than misses, however, particularly in her evocation of the private map of Aix-en-Provence which she drafted during her stays there with her two daughters in the fifties and early sixties in *Map of Another Town* (first published in 1964), which, together with *A Considerable Town* (first published in 1978), a more effortful apology for Marseilles, makes up this handsome volume.

Reviews by Nell Berry, Alan Bell, Ruth Isabel Ross, Andrew Murray, Keith McCulloch, J. K. L. Walker, Geoffrey Naylor, James Campbell.

Also in paperback

JANE ABDY and CHARLOTTE GERE. *The Souls: An Elite in English Society 1885 – 1930*. 192pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £6.95. 0 283 99062 7. □ First published in 1984 and reviewed in the *TLS* of July 27 that year.

LOUIS BUNUEL. *My Last Breath*. 266pp. Fontana. £3.50. 0 00 654088 0. □ First published in France as *Mon Dernier Soupir* in 1982. This translation, by Abigail Israel, was published in 1984 and reviewed in the *TLS* of January 27 that year.

JAQUES GERNET. *A History of Chinese Civilization*. 772pp. Cambridge University Press. £10.95. 0 521 31647 2. First published in French as *Le Monde Chinois* in 1972. This translation, by J. R. Foster, was first published in 1982 and reviewed in the *TLS* of June 24, 1983.

CHARLES HADFIELD. *British Canals: An Illustrated History*. 367pp. David and Charles. £8.95. 0 7153 8569 0. □ First published in 1950 and reviewed in the *TLS* of September that year.

WILLIAM HUNT. *The Puritan Movement: The coming of Revolution in an English County*. 365pp. Harvard University Press. £7.95. 0 674 73904 3. □ First published in 1983 and reviewed in the *TLS* of July 8 of that year.

DAVID S. LANDES. *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the making of the modern world*. 482pp. Harvard University Press. £7.95. 0 297 78625 3. □ First published in 1978 and reviewed in the *TLS* of November 24 that year.

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